A

# Conference WITH A THEIST.

## PART IV. and Laſt.

WHEREIN

I. The Authority of the Books of the Old and New Teſtament is maintained.

II. The Style of Scripture is vindicated from want of Eloquence and Method, from Obſcurity, Trivialneſs, &c.

III. Arguments urged to prove the Chriſtian Religion to be the only True and Beſt in the World.

By *William Nicholls*, D. D.

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TO THE

Right Reverend Father in God

# EDWARD

Lord Biſhop of

# WORCESTER.

My Lord,

*I Imagine, You will be ſome-thing ſurprized, that a Per-ſon you have ſo little knowledge of ſhould preſume to fix Your Lordſhips Name, and that to ſo Mean a Book; but however I have ventured to ſtrain ſome Points of Modeſty in this Re-*

*ſpect, to expreſs the Thanks that I together with all Good Men owe to Your Lordſhips indefatigable Labours for the Advantage of Gods Church, which upon all Occaſions you have ſo ſucceſsfully ſhewn: And I pray God, of his infinite Mercy, long continue to us ſo Great a Bleſſing.*

*But if I might preſume to wiſh any thing Farther, it ſhould be; that this ordinary Performance ſhould excite Your Lordſhips Matchleſs Pen, to enrich the World with a Nobler Production of your own, again upon this Subject, and to reaſſume the Cauſe of the* Chriſtian Religion

gion *againſt* Infidelity, *which* *You have formerly ſo glorioufly Maintain'd; ſo that what Holds You have not already driven the* Unbelievers *from, You would be pleaſed hereafter, at Your leaſure, to diſpoſſeſs them of.*

*It is indeed but requiſite that ſomething ſhould be ſaid for Religion, as often as it is boldly attacked, even by the meaneſt Men, rather than for Chriſtians to be totally ſilent, whilſt Infidelity talks ſo loud; which was the Occaſion of my Writing upon this Subject after the coming out of Mr.* Blounts *Book: But, my Lord, it will more conduce to the Ad-*

*vantage of Religion, if the Diſputes with the* Atheiſts *and* Unbelievers *were maintained moſtly by the greateſt Writers, whoſe extraordinary Learning and Solidity of Judgment might not only confute the Adverſaries, but ſhould take away from them the very Liberty of Cavilling; and by which too we might be ſure that Religion would not receive any detriment, in this her tendereſt Part, by an unskillful Managing. For the Miſtakes of injudicious Writers are leſs Miſchievous in other Controverſies than in this; for there they can affect only the out-ſide, but here they may the Vitals of Religion. I am not inſenſible that I am now*

*now arguing againſt my ſelf; but I hope my Miſtakes are chiefly in Phyſiology, or ſome other ſpeculative Points, which will, I truſt in God, do Religion no harm.*

*But however, every one muſt own, that the management of ſo important a Cauſe would be the ſafeſt, my Lord, in Your Hand; and if You would be pleaſed again to eſpouſe it, we ſhould ſoon ſee, that by Your invincible Strength of Reaſoning and unparallelled Learning,* Infidelity *would then be as much Aſham'd and Diſpairing, as now it is Impudent and Bold. Thus praying for Your*

*Lord-*

*Lordſhips Health and Happineſs and long Life, to purſue this or any other Good Deſign, God Almighty ſhall put into Your Heart, I am,*

My Lord,

Your Lordſhips

moſt dutiful and

obedient Servant

*Will. Nicholls.*

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A

# Conference

WITH A

# THEIST.

## PART IV.

*Of the Authenticalneſs of the Scripture.*

*Credentius.* *Philologus.*

*Philologus* having given *Credentius* a very Handſome Entertainment: When Dinner was done, and thoſe of the Family withdrawn, they were both again left alone; whereby they had a convenient Opportunity of proſecuting their former Diſpute.

*Phil.* Well! ſays *Philologus*, I find, by your Thoughtfulneſs, that your Mind is upon our Religious Debate ſtill, and I confeſs, is has been no unpleaſing ſatisfaction to me, to hear you ſay ſo much for your Religion, as you do. Indeed the Types and Predictions of Chriſt have always, till now, lain very hard upon my Belief; and to be plain with you, I took them to be only the idle Fancies or Miſtakes of Men, who did not underſtand the places of Scripture from whence they were cited; but ſince you have ſhewn, that this has all along been the National-way of Interpretation of theſe Places among the *Jews*; and that it is agreeable to the Uſual Method of Prophecy, to begin with a Secular Subject, and of a ſudden, by the Effort of the Holy Spirit, to run off to a Divine one; I confeſs, I am not ſo peremptory in my Opinion, as I was before.

I muſt needs own, upon more ſerious Thoughts, That there is nothing in the Lives of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, that deſerves that Contempt and Ridicule which ſome Witty Men throw upon them, and that the Rules which they lay down for Men to follow, would be much for the Good and Satisfaction of Mankind, if they were generally obſerved. But ſtill I much doubt

doubt of the Authority of thoſe Books wherein theſe things are related, and whether ſome have not contriv'd theſe fine Schemes of Morality, with a Divine Stamp upon them, to make them paſs upon Men the better. For my part, if I were ſure theſe Books were of God Almighty's Inditing, I ſhould be very ſcrupulous how I offended againſt the leaſt Point in them; But if they be only Moral Rules laid down by well-meaning Men under the Umbrage of Divine Authority, then I think there is ſcope for a prudent Latitude, for me to pick and chooſe amongſt them, as likes me beſt. But when you pretend to ſo much certainty of the Scriptures being indited by GOD Almighty, you are not ſo much as ſure by what Humane Hand they were firſt wrote. I will not ſtand to inſiſt now upon ſome leſſer Pieces of the New Teſtament; but I ſee that even the Ground-work of all your Religion, the Books of *Moſes*, as they are called, cannot be ſaid by whom they were wrote. Father *Simon*, an exact Inſpecter into theſe Matters, will have theſe, as other the moſt Ancient Pieces of the Bible, to be wrote by ſome *Jewiſh* Scribes, who anciently wrote the Memoirs of that Nation; and were made into one Piece, with Additions and Amendments by ſome

more Modern Compilator. And *Spinoſa* ſuſpects them to be forged totally in latter times. But however, be the Matter as it will, *Moſes* could never be the Author of them, unleſs he can be ſaid to write after he was dead. Says the Writer of theſe Books, *Behold! the Word which Moſes ſpoke before all the Congregation of Iſrael:* which ſhews that Book to be Wrote by one who lived after the Children of *Iſrael* had paſſed *Jordan*. *Moſes* is ſpoken of as a Third Perſon, and that with a high ſtrain of Commendation, which no body can be thought to ſpeak of himſelf, *Numb.* 12. *Moſes was the meekeſt Man upon the Earth*, and cap. 23. *There aroſe not a Prophet in Iſrael like unto Moſes*, *Gen.* 12. The Writer of that Book remarks, *That the Canaanite was then in the Land*, which Remark would be frivolous unleſs it was Wrote after the *Canaanite* was expelled by the prevalency of the *Iſraelites* Power. The Author of theſe Books gives ſeveral Names to Cities and Places which were not known till after *Moſes*'s time, as *Gen.* 14. that *Abraham purſued the Kings to Dan*, which Name was owing to that Tribe, which was not given till their Settlement in that place which was not till long after *Moſes:* He ſpeaks of *Hebron* which was ſo called from the Son of *Caleb*. Nay,

he

he ſpeaks poſitively of Matters of Fact which happened not till many Years after *Moſes* was dead; as *Gen.* 36. 21. *And theſe are the Kings which reigned in the Land of Edom, before there reigned any King over the Children of Iſrael*; which plainly ſhews this Book to be wrote by one who lived after the *Iſraelitiſh* Monarchy was begun. And *Deut.* 2. 12. it is related that *the Sons of Eſau dwelt in Seir after they had driven out and deſtroyed the ancient Inhabitants, called Horims, as the children of Iſrael did unto the Land of their poſſeſſion:* So that the Writer of this muſt needs live after that Conqueſt, which *Moſes* did not. And laſtly, the Writer of the *Pentateuch*, *Deut. cap. ult.* gives an account of *Moſes*'s Death and Burial, which does manifeſtly evince, that it was not *Moſes* himſelf. All which, and more, is clearly made out, beyond all contradiction, by *Pererius* in his Book of the *Præ-Adamites*, by Mr. *Hobbs*, in his *Leviathan*, and *Spinoſa* in his *Tractatus Theologo-Politicus*; and therefore you ought in Modeſty, to give up this Cauſe to us Unbelievers.

*Credentius:* It would be very pleaſant indeed, if you could perſwade us to this; but the Arguments of your Authors muſt be much ſtronger, before we can part with our Religion upon ſuch eaſie Terms.

*Moſes allowed to be the Author of the Pentateuch by all Antiquity.*

But I wonder, *Philologus*, That you ſhould Diſcard a Perſon from being Author of a Work which he has ſtood in poſſeſſion of for ſo many Ages; and that upon a few fond Criticiſms, advanced at firſt, without any juſt ground, by *Aben Ezra*, a *Jew*, and from him retailed by following Infidels and Opiniators. I profeſs theſe are the boldeſt Criticks I ever met with, and by the ſame Rules they may Diſpute any Authors, that they pleaſe, out of the World. But how came theſe Gentlemen, above all the reſt of the World, for ſuch a number of Ages before them, to find out this Secret? All theſe Obſervations are obvious enough to any one who reads *Moſes* his Writings; and yet we find none of the Ancients thought, they had ſufficient grounds to queſtion their being wrote by *Moſes*, upon this account. None of all theſe could be ſo ſtupid, as not to take notice of the Account of *Moſes* his Death at the end of *Deuteronomy*, and yet they were ſo wiſe as not to make the couſtruction of it, as theſe bold Writers do. They knew very well that ſuch Criticiſms were *too ſhallow* to bear down the univerſal conſent of the *World* in this Matter. For I dare ſay, no Book was ever attributed to any one

one with more univerſal conſent, than this is to *Moſes*. *Joſephus*, *Juſtin Martyr*, *Euſebius*, and St. *Cyril*, quote many Heathen Writers that give a great Character of *Moſes*, as the Author of theſe Books, as *Manetho*, *Philochorus* of *Athens*, *Eupolemus*, *Apollonius Molo*, *Caſtor* and *Diodorus Siculus*. Nay, the Teſtimony of *Juvenal*, is a ſufficient Confutation of this Opinion.

——*Tradidit arcano quodcunque volumine Moſes.*

*Pliny* and *Tacitus* likewiſe allow *Moſes* to be the Writer of thoſe Laws which go under his Name. *Numenius* the Philoſopher, when he calls *Plato Atticiſing-Moſes*, to Be ſure lookt upon *Moſes* as Writer of the *Pentateuch*, aud ſo did *Longinus*, when he gave an Inſtance out of him for his ſublime way of Writing. But the Tranſlation of the *Septuagint* is yet older than theſe Authorities, and there alſo is *Moſes* deemed the Author of thoſe Books.

Conſider yet further, That *Julian* and *Porphyry* and *Celſus* had all the Malice both againſt *Moſes* as well as againſt the *Jewiſh* aud *Chriſtian* Religion, that could ever be harboured in Humane Mind; they endea-

vour upon all occaſion to expoſe his Laws and his Hiſtorical Relations; but they never had the Forehead to aſſert that *Moſes* was not the Author of them. They knew very well, that upon the ſame grounds by which they pretended to that, they muſt give up their *Homer*'s and *Herodotus*'s, *Virgil* and *Livy*'s who have no other Claim to their Writings, but only univerſal Conſent; and therefore they were ſo wiſe, as to leave theſe hardy Arguments for the Infidels and Criticks of our Time.

*Father* Simon's *Suppoſition examined.*

Next let us conſider Father *Simon*'s Suppoſitions in this Matter, which I confeſs, are as extravagant and ill-grounded as any of thoſe of the more openly incredulous uſe to be. He tells us, That the Books of the *Pentateuch*, as other parts of the Old Teſtament were wrote by the Publick Scribes of the *Jews*, upon looſe Leaves rolled up together, round a Stick, and afterwards Compiled into the Form of Books by *Eſdras*, or ſome other Modern Writer, which looſe Leaves occaſioned the Tranſpoſitions of Paſſages and the Repetitions frequently to be met withal in Scripture. Now here is a very fine Hypotheſis of the Father's advancing indeed; but as ill a ground-work of the Authority of the Scriptures,

tures as any Infidel could be ſuppoſed to lay; this Learned Man may probably have ſhewn his Wit in this Curious Project; but I dare ſay, he would have ſhewn his Religion more by keeping in the Old Road. But to examine a little the Particulars of this ſtrange Hypotheſis. Here are ſeveral bold Suppoſitions, which the Father ought well to prove, namely, That there were ſuch Inſpired Scribes in all Ages among the *Jews*, That they uſed to Write their Books upon ſuch *looſe Leaves*; and that there was ſuch a Compilator who added theſe together, and put in and left out at his Diſcretion.

To begin with the firſt of theſe wild Suppoſes. How does he prove, that there was ſuch Inſpired Scribes, in all Ages among the *Jews*, up to the *Moſaical* Times? Why, The Father ſays, *That in all well-regulated Kingdoms, and particularly in the Eaſtern Nations, they had always certain perſons, whoſe Province it was to ſee that the moſt conſiderable Occurrences of State ſhould be preſerved in Writing*; and therefore concludes there muſt be ſuch among the *Jews*: *Hiſt. Crit. lib.* 1. *cap.*2. And he further urges, *That there were ſuch Scribes among the* Ægyptians, *and therefore* Moſes *being bred up in the Learning of the* Ægyptians, *and being a perfect Law-giver, he muſt be ſuppoſed likewiſe to ordain them*

*them among the* Jews. Aud are not theſe ſtrong Reaſons to build ſuch an extravagant Opinion upon? But how does it follow, that becauſe in all well regulated Kingdoms there were ſuch Scribes, therefore the *Jews* muſt have ſuch? There are in all Governments a great many things which would do well to be, which notwithſtanding are not, It is a very odd way of arguing in this corrupt State of Nature, to ſay a Thing is ſo, becauſe it ought. Is this a good conſqeuence, That no Infidel or Heterodoxical Book, which endeavours to undermine Religion, is read in *England* or *France*, becauſe no ſuch ought to be publickly read in a *Chriſtian Commonwealth?* Can no *Religious* be an *Infidel*? becauſe every one who pretends to be a good *Catholick* ought to be a good Chriſtian? But grant that Publick Scribes are and ought to be in every well eſtabliſhed *Common-wealth*; yet how does it follow from hence that there were *inſpired Scribes* among *Jews*? There might be *Scribes* in *Ægypt* and *Perſia*, and among the *Jews* too, whoſe Buſineſs it was to write *Annals*; but this is no Argument That the ordinary Scribes among the *Jews* were inſpired to write Canonical Scripture. The *Scribes* were an Order

*No ſettled Scribes to write Scripture among the* Jews.

Order of Men never heard of in ſuch early Times as thoſe of *Moſes*: Their Office began long after the Law was received and ſettled in the *Jewiſh* Nation, it being their buſineſs to write Tranſcripts of it, and Gloſſes upon it, and to explain the hard Paſſages of it to the ordinary People.

*Jewiſh Scripture not wrote upon looſe leavs.*

2. But then again there is no Certainty, that theſe Books were wrote *Originally* on looſe Leaves, and ſo careleſly huddled together as he imagined. That the Antient way of Writing was upon Rolls is plain enough, but that they were ſo looſely put together there is no Proof of. But methinks, Father *Simon* ought very well to have conſidered the moſt Ancient way of Writing, and have been ſure it did agree with his *Hypotheſis*, before he had ventured to have Broached ſuch an unheard of and bold Opinion. Why might not we as well ſuppoſe, that they were tacked together, as well as the Books of other Nations; and if his Argument of *Conveniency* be any Proof of a Matter of Fact, it is very probable they were ſo; for what a troubleſome thing would it be to read a Book the Leaves of which were ſo looſely rolled up? Nay, who would not think of the eaſie *Invention* of ſtitching the *Leaves* together to avoid

ſuch

ſuch Diſtraction? And this was the way of ordering the Volums, or Written Books among the Ancients; the Leaves of the *Papyrus* or the Parchment were tacked one to the other (like the Rolls in uſe among us) and ſo rolled round a Stick, till they arrived to a ſuitable bigneſs; which Roll they called a *Volume*. *Tibullus*, *Ovid*, *Pliny* and *Martial*, and others, that ſpeak any thing of the faſhion of the Ancient Books, deſcribe them in the foregoing Manner, which is perfectly inconſiſtent with this Notion of Father *Simon's*. If it be ſaid, that this Faſhion might obtain among the *Greeks* and *Romans*, becauſe they made uſe of the *Papyrus* and *Parchment*, but it was otherways among the *Jews*, who, as the reſt of the Antienter People of the World, might write on *Palm* Leaves, as *Varro* and *Pliny* relate. To this I ſay, that it is a miſtake in *Varro* to think, that the uſe of Paper made of the *Ægyptian Papyrus* was ſo modern in *Europe*, as he ſuppoſes; for he contends that *Alexander* learned the uſe of it firſt, in his Conqueſt of the *Eaſtern* Empire, when he was building *Alexandria*.

Plin. Nat. Hiſt. Lib. xiii. Cap. 13.

And this *Pliny* has ſufficiently evinced. *I find, ſays he, great Authorities againſt the Opinion of* Varro *as to the Antiquity of Paper*; *Caſſius Hemina an Ancient Writer of Annals*; *in*

*in his Fourth Book relates, that* Cneius Terentius *the Scribe, as he was ploughing over again his Field, which was upon the Mount* Janiculus *he found a Cheſt, in which* Numa *King of* Rome *had lain, and in the ſame Cheſt were his Books found,* P. Cornelius, F. Cethegus, M. Bebius, Q. F. Pamphilus *being Conſuls, to whoſe Time from the Kingdom of* Numa *are reckoned DXXXV. Years. which Books were wrote upon* Paper; *and which, yet to the greater wonder had continued buried ſo many Years. Wherefore in ſo remarkable a Matter, I will ſet down the very Words of* Hemina, *ſome wondered how theſe Books could continue ſo long, and he gave the Reaſon thus. There was a Square Stone which lay about the middle of the Cheſt bound all about with Wax Candle, and upon this the Books were laid which was thought the Cauſe why they did not Rot. The Books were done over with Oil of Cedar, which was eſteemed the Reaſon why the Worm was not in them. In theſe Books were wrote ſome Precepts of the* Pythagorick *Philoſophy; and were burnt by* Q. Petilius *the Prætor, becauſe they were Books of Philoſophy.* And there he likewiſe tells a Story of *Mutianus*, who was thrice Conſul and Preſident of *Lycia* in *Pliny*'s Time, who averred he had then lately read a Letter of *Sarpedon* ſent from the Siege of *Troy*,

*Troy*, which was wrote upon Paper. And long before this, 'tis probable that the uſe of the *Papyrus*, and the way of making up Books, as the *Greeks* and *Romans* did, might be in uſe among the *Eaſtern Nations*, who were nigh, or did Converſe with the *Ægyptians*. And if the Books in the *Jewiſh* Nation were of the ſame Form with thoſe of others, as 'tis probable in the latter Time of that Common-wealth they were, the Suppoſition of Father *Simon*'s looſe Leaves is at an End. 'Tis plain, that ſome very like Form of making up Books was in uſe in the *Davidical* Time, from an Expreſſion in the 40. *Pſalm*, which bears *David*'s Name. *In the Volumn of the Book it is written.* The Word is ſingular, *Bimgillath*, and denotes only one Roll, which would probably have been expreſſed Plurally, if there had been ſo many looſe Pieces as the Father pretends. And if any Argument may be drawn from the uſage of the *Jews* at this Time, and for many Ages backwards, they joyn the Sheets of Parchment, upon which their Law is wrote, together, and ſo Roll them upon the Sticks. But as for Father *Simon*'s Faſhion, I defie him to produce any Age or Nation where it was in Uſe; unleſs it be in the Story of *Sibyl*, and her Leaves, which is the exact Emblem of this Father's Notion. But as for the *Mo-*

*Moſaical* Times, I queſtion whether the way of Writing upon Paper or Leaves either, were in Uſe. It is moſt propable, that the way of Writing, then moſt in Uſe, was Engraving the Letters upon Wood, Stone, or Lead. The firſt Writing, we have an Account of in Scripture, is the Tables of the Law, which were of Stone, and propably they were adapted to the common uſage of that Time, as moſt of the *Ægyptian* Hieroglyphicks were upon Stone likewiſe: But there is a Paſſage in *Job*, which diſcovers the uſal way of Writing in that early Age. *Oh that my Words were Written, Oh that they were Printed in a Book! That they were graven with an Iron Pen and Lead, or in a Rock for ever.* The latter Verſe ſeems only to be Explanatory of the Former; the Former ſpeaks of Writing in general, the Latter of the Particular Ways of Writing then in Uſe, *viz.* upon Lead or Stones. Now if this be true, as it is certainly moſt probable, that the Writing upon Tables was the uſual way of Writing in the *Moſaical* Times, then there is an end of the Story of the Memoirs wrote upon looſe Leaves by the Scribes of that Time, which came to be ſo confounded afterwards; and the Father muſt be content to look out for another *Hypotheſis*. But 'tis not worth while

to

to ſtand to Confute this extravagant Whimſie of the Confuſion of the looſe Leaves, which is grounded upon no Authority, and is contrary to all good Senſe; and which if it had happened would eaſily have been rectified by thoſe who came afterwards to compile thoſe Memoirs into an Hiſtory. And after all, thoſe Repetitions and Relations of Matters of Fact out of their exact Time, are better accounted for by the ancient Simplicity and unartificial Way of Writing in thoſe Early Ages, than by this ſtrange *Hypotheſis*. Let any one be judge, whether it be not eaſier to imagine that *Moſes* reſumed the Relation of the Creation of Man in the latter End of the ſecond Chapter of *Geneſis*, than that the Leaves of a former looſe Copy were ſo jumbled together, that all the Relation in the former Part of that Chapter happened to come between.

*No Compilers to alter Original Scripture.*

3. But when did theſe bold Compilers live, that ventured upon Epitomizing theſe ancient Memoirs, upon leaving out and putting in according to their Diſcretion? This is as hard a Matter to make out as the buſineſs of the Rolls. There is a poſitive Command in the Law againſt any Attempt of this Nature. *You ſhall not add unto the Word which I Command you, neither ſhall*

*ſhall you diminiſh ought from it*, Deut. 4. 2. Nay, any Man that ſhould have had the boldneſs to have adventured upon this, would, without all doubt, have incurred the capital Puniſhment inflicted upon Falſe Prophets. But if *Ezra*, or *Nehemiah*, or any one elſe, had a mind to alter the Old Original Law he had found in the *Jewiſh Archives*, How was it poſſible he could effect it? Do you think that the Law had continued ſo many Ages, and there were no Tranſcripts of it? Or if the People were Ignorant what was wrote in the Old Law, the *Prieſts*, whoſe Buſineſs it was to Study it, could not be Impoſed upon after the ſame manner. Nay, there is no doubt to be made but they would have improved all Opportunities, to have detected ſuch a Crime in *Ezra*, or *Nehemiah*, as Father *Simon*, and the Infidels, are willing to ſuppoſe of them. We read, *Neh.* 13. 35. how ſeverely ſome of the Prieſts, for their faults, were uſed, upon this Reformation of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, and therefore, to be ſure, theſe angry Prieſts, would never have ſpared them, if they had made any, the ſmalleſt Alterations, in the Law of *Moſes*. 'Tis poſſible that *Eſdras* might add a Word or two by way of Explication, or Marginal Note to the Text, which may ſince have

crept into the Copy; but that he ſhould leave out, or Tranſpoſe, or add any thing material, is as impoſſible, as for me to impoſe upon the *Chriſtian World* a Second Part of St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel, or to Stifle the Firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*.

*Phil.* But if *Eſdras* could not ſo eaſily alter the Old Law of *Moſes*, as Father *Simon* pretends, he might make them a new one. It was an eaſie Matter to impoſe what Canon of Scripture he pleaſed then upon the poor ignorant *Jews*, which were worn out by a long Captivity; who could not be ſuppoſed to know much of the Antiquity of their Nation before, and to be ſure much leſs of it afterwards. 'Twas but for him, or ſome other cunning Scribe, to write a Book under *Moſes*, or *Joſhua*'s Name, and none of the *Jews* were ſuch *Criticks* to diſcover the Fraud.

*Cred.* Let the *Jews* be as Ignorant as you can ſuppoſe, it is a thing impoſſible for any Perſon to put a Cheat of this nature upon them.

1. For how can it be ſuppoſed that a whole Nation ſhould take up ſuch a number of troubleſome Ceremonies, only upon a Scribes pretending he found ſuch old Injunctions wrote

wrote by an Ancient Legiſlator of theirs, ſeveral Hundred Years before? Would not this be a wiſe Project for a Man to think to Bubble a whole Nation upon this pretence? What People would be ſo mad to make their Children undergo ſuch a Painful Rite as *Circumciſion*; to take upon them every Year the trouble of eating the *Paſcal Lamb* in one place, though at never ſo great diſtance from it; to endure the Fatigue of ſo many Purifications for Legal Uncleanneſſes; and what is more, to part with the Tenth Part of their Incomes, to thoſe who were to keep up theſe difficult Injunctions? Certainly the moſt Stupid Nation in the World would more narrowly Examine into theſe Matters than this comes to, and would never part ſo with their Liberty and Money too, upon the pretended Authority of ſome Old Records which an Antiquarian Scribe had brought to Light.

2. But the Subſtance of the *Jewiſh Law* was ſo far from being invented about *Eſdras* his time, that it was woven into the Practice of the *Jews* in that Age, and for many Ages before. Their *Circumciſion*, *Sabbaths*, *Feaſts*, *Purifications*, *&c.* were in uſe long before *Eſdras* was; and therefore you muſt allow them before *Eſdras*, to have ſome written Laws, which obliged

them to these Ceremonies; and why they should not be those which go under *Moses* his Name, I think there is no Reason.

*Phil.* I am apt to think that *Esdras* did not Forge the whole Body of the *Jewish Worship*, but that he found them in the Possession of some of their Feasts and Ceremonies; and therefore he might write the *Pentateuch* for a *Rationale* of those uncouth Customs. As if you or I should feign a History of the Celebrated St. *George* of *England*, and give a Fabulous Account of the Origine of *Hocktide*, or of Eating Mince-Pies at *Christmass*.

*Cred.* But do you in good earnest think, That the *Jews* had no more to say for their Religion before *Esdras* his time, than the *English* have for such Vulgar Customs? Their Religion was so intermixed with their State, that it must be the Interest of their Government to keep the Accounts of both exact; and therefore it is idle to suppose to think their Religion should have as uncertain an Original, as our Ludicrous and Vulgar Customs. Nay, 'tis plain, that the *Jews* read the History of the Law long before *Esdras* came into the World. Many of the Ancient *Psalms*, which were as old as

as *David*'s time, allude to ſeveral Particulars of the *Moſaical Laws*, ſome are Hymns made purpoſely upon the Excellency of them, and others, as the 78, and 126, are but ſhort Epitomes of the Hiſtory of the *Pentateuch*. In the Books of *Solomon*, and all the Prophets, there are ſeveral Paſſages which do plainly demonſtrate, That the Books of the *Pentateuch* were then extant, when thoſe were wrote, becauſe they refer ſo often to the Matter contained in them, and ſo conſtantly exhort to the obſervation of the Laws there preſcribed.

*Phil.* And perhaps *Eſdras* Forged theſe Books too, when his Hand was in; as he might do all the reſt of the Canon of Scripture.

*Cred.* But there is all the Reaſon and Moral Certainty in the World againſt ſuch a *Perhaps*. A Man muſt have a very good will for Forgery indeed, to Forge ſo many Volumns as theſe are. If *Eſdras* had had the luck to come off ſucceſsfully in counterfeiting the *Pentateuch*, methinks he might have congratulated his good Fortune, and ſate down content with that, but he was mad to put himſelf upon other hazards, which could do him but little ſervice. For

when he had made the People believe that his contrived *Pentateuch* was *Moſes*'s, why ſhould he go to Forge the *Pſalms* and *Prophets*, which ſignified very little to the Cheat you ſuppoſe him to be carrying on? Nay, how is it poſſible that one Man ſhould be able to counterfeit ſo many different Pieces? What a tedious Toil would it be to feign ſuch a long Series of Hiſtory? What wonderful Care and Labour would it require to make the Parts of it but tolerably to hang together, ſo as not to be diſcovered by a heedleſs Reader? And the Labour will be greater yet, when we conſider that all the other Books muſt be wrote too by the ſame Man. But the Difficulty will ſtill increaſe, when we conſider how many different Stiles this one Man muſt imitate; the Noble and Sublime way of Expreſſion remarkable in *Job*, *Iſaiah*, and ſeveral of the *Pſalms*, the Gravity and Majeſty of *Moſes* his Writings, and the Flowing Plainneſs of the other Hiſtoriographers; the Mournfulneſs of *Jeremiah*, the Ruſticity of *Amos*, the Denſity and Cloſeneſs of *Solomon*, and the Enigmatical Viſions of *Ezekiel* and *Daniel*; certainly no Man ever had ſuch a Task as this, which the Infidels put upon *Eſdras*. The ſame Man might as well be ſaid to have Wrote all the *Greek* and *Latine* Poets and Hiſto-

Hiſtorians, as ſo many of the Canonical Books; for the Stile of thoſe are not more different from each other, or the Compoſition more difficult.

And now, by your leave, I will endeavour to encounter a little with your *Gigantick Arguments*, by which you Infidels are wont to defie the Living God, and the Revealed Books of his Servant *Moſes*.

The firſt Argument is drawn from an Expreſſion in the Preface of the Book of *Deuteronomy*, *The Words which Moſes ſpake unto all Iſrael* beyond *Jordan in the Wilderneſs*; which diſcovers, as is pretended, that the Book was wrote by one who lived in the Land of *Canaan*, which is within *Jordan*. This is a Part of the *Myſtery of the Twelve*, as *Aben Ezra* calls it, by which piece of *Cant*, I ſuppoſe, he means Twelve Places of Scripture, which he, or ſome Infidels of his time, had picked out to make the World believe that the Inſpired Books were not wrote by thoſe whoſe Names they bear. But what if after all the Words are not to be Tranſlated *beyond Jordan*? and 'tis plain, our *Engliſh* Tranſlation has rendered them *on this ſide Jordan*. The Original is *Bengeber Jardan*, which the *Lexicographers* ſay *is on this ſide*, and they give this Mark of Diſtinction, that when *Gneber* is joyned with the

Prefix *Mem*, it ſignifies *beyond*, but when joyned with *Beth* (as in this place) it ſignifies *on this ſide*. *Vid. Pagn. Lex. in Voce Gnabar.* In ſome places it ſignifies *over-againſt*, as *Exod.* 25. 27. *Ezek.* 1. 9. In other places it ſignifies *on ſide of*, as *Exod.* 28. 26. *Iſa.* 7. 10. *Jer.* 48. 28. And the *Septuagint*, though in moſt places they Tranſlate *Begneber*, by πέραν, yet ſometimes they render *Gnaber*, *ſide*, as 1 *Kings* 4. 24. *He had peace* (ἐκ πάντων τῶν μερῶν) *on every ſide*. But there is a Paſſage two Chapters after this, *Deut.* 3. 8. which it is impoſſible to make Senſe of, after *Aben Ezra*'s Tranſlation of the Word: *We took at that time out of the Land of the two Kings of the Amorites, the Land which was* on this ſide *Jordan*. For *Moſes* to ſay, where he was, the Land *beyond Jordan*, he muſt mean the Land of *Canaan*, where the Kings of the *Amorites* had nothing to do, and where *Moſes* never took any thing. But after all, ſuppoſe we ſhould grant that *Begneber* ſignifies in this place *beyond*, which we have proved it does not, yet this Suppoſition of theſe Infidels will not from hence follow. It would be no very great Impropriety of Speaking, for *Moſes* in his Circumſtances, being on the *Eaſt*-ſide of *Jordan*, to call that *beyond Jordan*. The *Romans* called the *Gauls*,

*Gauls*, though they were in *Gallia* themſelves, *Tranſalpini*, and the preſent *Italians*, when in *England*, would, without Soleciſm, call all on this ſide the *Alps Tramontani*. If I, being in *Holland*, was to write our Hiſtory of *England*, I ſhould never ſtick to ſay, The King ſuch a time went *beyond Sea*, though I, when I wrote it, was on the other ſide of the Sea my ſelf. For the Hiſtory being chiefly to be read in *England*, I would purpoſely Adapt every thing to the common way of Speaking there. Now *Moſes* being aſſured by God, of the Settlement of the *Iſraelites* in *Canaan*, which was within the River *Jordan*, and his Books being deſigned for ſtanding Memoirs, to be read by that Nation after their Settlement, what Incongruity would it be for *Moſes* to call that place *beyond Jordan*, which the *Jews*, who were to read his Hiſtory, would ever after their entring into *Canaan* call ſo? Certainly never any Author's Work was pretended to be Criticiſed away after this ſimple rate; and I durſt undertake, upon the very ſame Argument, to Diſpute the Authority of an hundred Books in the World, which are nevertheleſs unqueſtionable.

As to the Second Argument you urge, That *Moſes* is in theſe Books ſpoken of as

a third Perſon, and ſometimes has Commendation given him; I do not conceive that this does prove *Moſes* not to be the Author of theſe Books. For there are ſeveral Hiſtories in the World, the Authors of which are in no wiſe queſtioned, that are wrote by Perſons who all along mention themſelves in the third Perſon; which is the more proper way, when the Matter is Hiſtorical, and the Writer is principally concerned in it; for then a Man may ſpeak more freely of his own Actions, and not ſeem to talk ſo much of himſelf, as he would do when he ſpeaks directly in the firſt Perſon. And if this was any Argument againſt the Genuineſs of the Books of *Moſes*, we may as well queſtion the Hiſtories of *Cæſar*, *Xenophon*, or *Joſephus*. Nay, theſe very Authors I have mentioned, ſpeak altogether as much, or more, in their own Commendation, than *Moſes* does. How often does *Xenophon*, in his Hiſtory of the Expedition of *Cyrus*, relate his great Skill in managing the Army, his Fame and Intereſt among the Soldiery, his Contempt of Money, and the like? And how often does *Cæſar*, in his *Commentaries*, make fetches to Blazon his Fortitude and Clemency? *Joſephus*, in his Hiſtory of the *Jewiſh Wars*, declares himſelf to be *the wiſeſt of all the Jews*,

*Jews*, that he was *admired by the* Roman *Chiefs for his great Virtues*; *that* Titus *wondered at his Fortitude under Affliction*, &c. Which is as much as what *Moſes* ſays of himſelf, That he *was the meekeſt Man upon the Earth*. But there is a great deal more to be ſaid for *Moſes*'s ſpeaking thus of himſelf, than the Infidels are pleaſed to take notice of. *Moſes*, in this Chapter, was ſufficiently provoked by the Accuſation of his Brother and Siſter, as if he valued himſelf too much upon the Frequency of his Revelations, eſpecially when they thought this was over-ballanced by the Blot he had contracted in Marrying an *Ethiopian* Woman. *Hath the Lord*, ſay they, *ſpoken only by Moſes, hath He not ſpoken alſo by us*. This was a very fit time, upon this heinous Accuſation, for *Moſes* to Remark to his Reader, that this Imputation was groundleſs; that he was ſo far from being proud, that notwithſtanding all theſe great Favours God had vouchſafed him, he was a very Meek Man. *Now the man Moſes was very meek, above all the men who were upon the face of the earth*. Even in this very place, in which he is forced to vindicate his Integrity, by a ſort of *Elogium* of himſelf, you may obſerve it done with a decent ſort of a Modeſty, in the Expreſſion, *the man Moſes*.

*ſes.* I am ſure ſome others, who find fault with this plainneſs, for all their affected Modeſty, would have ſet out their Perfections with a greater Air of Oſtentation, if they had half the Pretence to them which *Moſes* had; only perhaps they would have taken care to have diſguiſed them with a little Artificial Humility. Nay, to ſpeak my Mind freely, this Paſſage is ſo far from being an Argument to me againſt the Genuineſs of theſe Books, that it wonderfully convinces me of the Truth of them, by the plain, natural ſimplicity it carries with it. It would indeed have been ſomewhat ſuſpicious, if it had been worded after the modern way of Speech ſo, as if *Moſes* ſhould ſeem to be willing to force a Complement from his Reader, by mincing the Matter, and pretending that his Honour or Vertue were not ſo great as might ſeem to ſome, and that he might have given occaſion for ſome Mens Miſunderſtanding, or the like; but when in plain ſimplicity, he here Records his Vertues, as in other places his Failures, this is to me a demonſtrative note of unaffected Antiquity, and alſo affords a caſt of the real Goodneſs and Simplicity of that Ancient Prophet.

Your

Your next Argument is drawn from the Obſervation which the Author of the *Pentateuch* makes of *the Canaanites being in the land.* But why muſt it neceſſarily from hence follow, That the Writer of this muſt needs live after the *Canaanite* was expelled by the *Iſraelite?* *Aben Ezra*, who firſt advanced this Notion, will not be Poſitive, that this Conſequence muſt be drawn from it. He ſays, *That 'tis probable the meaning of the Words are, That the Canaanites took the Country from ſome former Poſſeſſors; but if this be not ſo, then there is a Myſtery in the Matter, which he that underſtands, let him hold his peace.* And it were to be wiſhed, that *Spinoſa* had been as Modeſt as his Maſter. But if any one ſeriouſly conſiders the Circumſtances of the Hiſtory from which theſe Words are taken, there is no ground for that Second Irreligious Senſe, which *Aben Ezra* ſlily hints at. In that Chapter, where theſe Words are found, is related the Command *Abraham* had from God to leave his own Country for a Land which God ſhould ſhew him, which *Abraham* readily obeyed, and went into the Land of *Canaan.* Now 'tis but reaſonable, that the Relator of this Affair, ſhould tell the Reader what People Inhabited this new Country. This is expected from every Hiſtorian, who

ſpeaks

ſpeaks of places not generally known, as *Cæſar* does, when he writes of his Expedition into *Gaul* or *Britain*. Now why might not *Moſes* ſay, *The Canaanite was in that land*, as well as *Cæſar* ſay ſuch a Province was Inhabited by the *Ædui*, another by the *Bellovaci?* Nay, there ſeems to be a further Remark in this Paſſage, for the Satisfaction of the Reader, which is this. It is known, that about *Moſes*'s time, and before, Nations frequently changed their Seats, going from one Country to another, and very few were of long Standing in the places where they lived: Therefore it was a Material Remark of *Moſes*, to ſay, That the *Canaanite* was the Inhabitant of that Country, even in *Abraham*'s time. This, conſidering the State of thoſe early Times, ſeems to be the plain Senſe of the Words, and much more natural than that which the Infidels would put upon them. For, ſuppoſing *Eſdras*, or ſome other late Writer, had wrote this Book, what a wiſe Piece of Work was it to inform the Reader that the *Canaanites* formerly lived in the Land of the *Iſraelites*, which every Child of their Nation muſt be ſuppoſed to know? Neither *Eſdras*, nor any other Man of Senſe, could have made ſuch an idle Remark as this, To obſerve that the *Iſraelites* did not live

live in the Land of *Canaan*, before their Progenitor *Abraham* came into it.

As for your next Objection, That ſome Names are mentioned in this Hiſtory which are of a more Modern Impoſition than *Moſes* his time. This may be fairly accounted for, by ſuppoſing that ſome Ancient Tranſcriber changed the Old and Forgotten Names, for the New Ones, which were better known; and 'tis poſſible this might be done, at the Review of the Scriptures in *Eſdras* his time. But as for the Inſtances you have mentioned, they, in all probability, might be the Ancient Names in *Moſes* his time. *Gen.* 14. 14. *Abraham* is ſaid to *purſue his Enemies unto Dan*; which might not be the Name of the City called from the Tribe, but ſome other place. St. *Jerom*, and others write, That *Dan* is a River in *Paleſtine*, which joyning with *Jor*, makes up the Famous River *Jordan*: So that probably the *Dan* here mentioned, may be that Rivulet. And as for the Name *Hebron*, it is not ſaid in *Joſhua*, that the new Name *Hebron* was then given, but the *Name of* Hebron *was before Kirjah-arba*, which might be a conſiderable while before, for what any one can Aſcertain.

Neither

Neither is your Objection from *Deut.* 2. 12. so considerable as your Authors would make: Our Translation has it thus: *The Horims also dwelt in Seir before time, but the Children of Esau succeeded them, when they had destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their stead, as Israel did unto the land of his possession*, &c. 1. You may note that these three whole Verses together, *viz.* 10, 11, 12. are all put in by way of *Parenthesis*, and 'tis possible may be the Explanation of some latter Writer than *Moses*. 2. Neither was it all improper for *Moses* to say, That the *Israelites* had driven out their Enemies, and possessed their place; for though in *Moses* his time, this was not absolutely true of the *Canaanites*, yet this was true of *Sihon* King of the *Amorites*, and *Og* the King of *Bashan*; and the Tribes of *Reuben* and *Gad* had their Settlements in the Conquered Countries in *Moses* his time. Wherefore the *Arabick Version* is not, *As Israel did unto the land of his possession*, &c. but, *As Israel hath done in certain possessions which God hath given him.*

And so as for your last Objection, Concerning the Relation of the Death and Burial of *Moses*, at the end of *Deuteronomy*, we need not say with *Philo* and *Josephus*, that he proves this Prophetically; it is sufficient

ficient to ſay as the generality of the *Jews* do, That it was added by *Joſhua*, who continued the Series of his Hiſtory, or by *Eſdras* and the great Synagogue, upon the Review of the Canon of Scripture, after the Captivity.

*Phil.* All this is pretty plauſible, but you cannot ſay ſo much, I believe, for the other Reputed Authors of the Books of the *Old Teſtament*; for to begin with the Book of *Joſhua*; that Hiſtory could never be wrote by that Perſon: For it ſhews it ſelf to be wrote by another Man, who ſpeaks of *Joſhua* as a diſtinct Perſon, and that ſometimes with great Commendation, which he cannot be ſuppoſed to do ſo undecently himſelf, as *Joſh.* 6. 27. *The Lord was with Joſhua, and his fame was noiſed throughout all the Country:* And Chap. 11. 15. *He left nothing undone of all the Lord commanded Moſes.* Beſides, he quotes the Book of *Jaſher*, or the *Juſt*, as an Ancienter Book than this of *Joſhua*, and out of which this ſeems to be Collected. Nay, the very relation of his Dying Speech and Burial, ſhews it could not be wrote by *Joſhua.* But there are two places which put it out of all Exception, that this Book was wrote ſome

*Tract. Theologo-Pol.* p. 159, &c.

Ages after *Joshua*'s time, Chap. 16. 10. It is said, *They drave not out the Canaanites, that dwelt in Gezer, but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day.* And Chap. 10. 14. *There was no day like that before it, or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man.* Now no Writer can with any Propriety use these Expressions, but one who lived a considerable time after these things happened. To say nothing of the Book of *Judges*, where the Kings of *Israel* are mentioned, *Judges* 17. 6. 18. 1. From a Passage, 1 *Sam.* 1. 1. it is evident, That the Books of *Samuel* were wrote in late times, so long after *Samuel*, that his times were counted by this Writer Ancient. *Before time, in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake; Come, and let us go to the Seer; for he that is now called a Prophet, was in fore-time called a Seer.* Nay, 'tis plain, that this Book is a Collection out of divers older Writers, and those oddly hudled together; because there are two accounts given of *David*'s becoming known to *Saul*, one by quieting his Evil Spirit, and the the other by killing the Philistines, *Vid. Chap.* 16. & 17. The Books of the *Kings* and *Chronicles* were Compiled in latter times, out of other Memoirs, 1 *Kings* 14. 19.

*Id.* P. 172.

19. & 29. out of the Book of *Gad*, 1 *Chron.* 29. 29. and *Iddo*, 2 *Chron.* 9. 29. & 12. 15. And as for *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, thoſe Books could be wrote by neither of thoſe Perſons whoſe Name they bear, becauſe *Neh.* 12. 9. 10. There is a Catalogue of the Prieſts down to *Jaddus*, who lived in the time of *Alexander the Great*, and met him in his Expedition. *Job* is a Book wrote by no Body knows who; and it is ing uncertain whether it be an Hiſtory, or an Allegory: it ſeems to be a Gentile Compoſition by the Affectation of the Heathen Poetry, where there is a Counſel of the Gods called, and *Momus*, which is here called *Satan*, carps at the Divine Decrees: But however, it plainly appears to be the work of a Studious Man, at eaſe in his Cloſet, and not of a ſick Man languiſhing in Aſhes. The *Pſalms* are a late Compoſition, for many of them relate to the Captivity; and *Philo* writes, That the 84th *Pſalm* was Compoſed when *Jehoiakin* was detained in Priſon at *Babylon*; and the 89th. was wrote when he obtained his Liberty. The *Proverbs of Solomon*, perhaps, are not older; however, not more Ancient than King *Joſiah*, as appears from *Prov.* 25. 1. *Theſe are the Proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, King of Judah, copied out.* And ſo

for the Book of *Iſaiah*, he is ſaid, 2 *Chron.* 26. 22. to have wrote the Acts of *Uzziah*, but there is nothing of theſe in his Prophecy. The Prophecy of *Jeremiah*, in its Hiſtorical Parts, is taken out of ſome older Chronological Book, without any order of Time, the ſame Hiſtory being rehearſed divers ways: For in *Chap.* 37. the Cauſe of *Jeremiah*'s Impriſonment is ſaid to be the Suſpition of his flying to the *Chaldeans*; and in *Chap.* 28. his Prophecying againſt *Zedekiah*. After *Chap.* 21. there are Fifteen whole Chapters clapt in by way of Parentheſis, which are Prophecies in *Jehoiakin*'s Reign, the Predeceſſor of *Zedekiah*, and the Thread of the Story reaſſumed, *Chap.* 38. which plainly Evinces this Book to be a Collection out of divers Hiſtorians. To ſay nothing of the Falſity of his Prophecy, when he Fore-tells, That *Zedekiah* ſhould die in Peace, *Jer.* 34. 5. when the poor King was taken Priſoner by the *Chaldeans*, had his Eyes put out by the unmerciful Conquerors, and died in that miſerable Captivity. The Book of *Ezekiel* ſeems to be the Fragment of ſome greater Work, as appears from the very firſt Words of this Prophecy: *Now it came to paſs in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month*, without naming the Year, or

or the King's Reign, as ſuppoſing thoſe ſufficiently known by what had gone before. Neither is it probable that what we have now, are the Set of Prophecies uttered by *Hoſea*, they being ſo very few; whereas he is ſaid to have Propheſied Fourſcore and Four Years. And we have nothing of the Prophecies of *Jonah*, but that to the *Ninevites*; whereas, 2 *Kings* 14. 25. he is recorded to have Propheſied to the *Jews*. *Daniel* ſeems to be Compoſed long after the Return from *Babylon*, when the Sect of the *Phariſees* was up, becauſe in the laſt Chapter the Reſurrection of the Dead is ſo plainly deſcribed, which their Oppoſers, the *Sadducees*, did deny. In ſhort, all the Hiſtorical Books of Scripture, and many of the others, do plainly appear to be the work of one Hiſtorian, who was carrying on the ſame deſign, for he begins to give an Account of the firſt Origine of the *Hebrew Nation*, how *Moſes* gave them his Laws, and made Predictions of the Promiſed Land, of their chooſing a King, and their Calamities when they neglected the Law; which is ſhewn all along in the Series of the Hiſtory, 'till it ends in the final downfall of that State. But as for other Matters, which make nothing to the Confirma-

*Tract. Theol. Pol.* P. 162.

tion of that Law, this Compilator paſſes them over in Silence, or refers his Reader to other Writers. And for all you have ſaid to the contrary, I ſuſpect *Eſdras* to be the Man. For *Nehe.* 8. 9. it is ſaid, *That he cauſed the Law of God to be read, explained, and they gave the Senſe, and they underſtood the Scripture.* Which was probably this new Gloſs of *Eſdras*, which goes now under *Moſes* his Name, and was a Comment upon *Moſes* his old Laws: And when this was done, he ſet himſelf to write a Hiſtory of his Nation, from the firſt Creation of Mankind, to the Diſſolution of the *Jewiſh* Common-wealth, giving different Names to the Books.

*Cred.* You have amaſſed here together, *Philologus*, a great many Sophiſms of a very confident Writer, who ſhews all along his Atheiſtical Book, a great deal more Forehead than Argument, which is the general Character of moſt Men of that Strain. But to conſider a little the Particulars of this Furious Attack.

*Joſhua the Author of the Book of his Name.*

It is no part of the Chriſtian Religion to believe that *Joſhua* wrote this Book, but becauſe generally in the *Jewiſh* Church it has gone under his Name, there is

is no reaſon to quit this Opinion, eſpecially when there are no Arguments to the contrary which are ſatisfactory. In the time of the Writer of the Book *Eccleſiaſticus*, he ſeems to be reputed the Writer of this Book, by an Expreſſion there, *Eccl.* 46. 1. *Jeſus the ſon of Naue, was valiant in the wars, and ſucceſſor of Moſes in the Prophecies*, i. e. In the Language of the *Jews*, the next Writer of Inſpired Scripture after *Moſes*. This Book is quoted by the Writer of the Book of *Kings*, 1 *Kin.* 16. 34. *In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firſt-born, and ſet up the gates thereof in his youngeſt ſon Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which he ſpake by Joſhua the Son of Nun.* Which manifeſtly refers to the ſaying of *Joſhua*, *Joſh.* 6. 26. *Curſed be the man before the Lord, that riſeth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he ſhall lay the foundation thereof in his firſt-born, and in his youngeſt ſon he ſhall ſet up the gates of it.* And the vigorous old Age of *Caleb*, mentioned *Joſh.* 14. 10. is alluded to by the Son of *Sirach*, Eccl. 46. *And the Lord gave ſtrength unto Caleb, which remained with him to his old Age.* Beſides, there is a remarkable Note of the Antiquity of this Book, that it calls the Months by the Names of *Firſt*, *Second*, *&c.* which the

Books of *Heſter*, *Haggai*, *Daniel*, *&c.* do not generally, but call the Months by the *Babyloniſh Names*.

As to your Argument that he could not be the Author of it, becauſe he is ſpoke of in the Third Perſon, and there are ſome things ſaid therein which reflect his Praiſe; This is no more (as I have ſaid before) than what is uſual in other Writers; and you may as well take away *Cæſar*'s or *Joſephus* his Book from him upon this account, as this from *Joſhua*. And ſo for the account which is given in this Hiſtory of his Death and Burial, it is probable that *Samuel*, or the next Succeſſor to him in the Prophecies, ſupplied thoſe Paſſages before he began the Hiſtory of the *Judges*.

It is true that *Joſhua* quotes the Book *Jaſer*, but it does not appear that this was an Ancient Hiſtory out of which this was Compiled; it was probably, as *Grotius* Conjectures, an Επινίκιον, or Song of Victory, upon the Conqueſts of the *Gibeonites*, and ſo wrote before *Joſhua* Compoſed his Hiſtory.

Neither do the Expreſſions [*unto this day*] and the like, prove this Hiſtory wrote any Ages after the Tranſactions in *Joſhua*'s time; for the paſſing over of many Years is ſufficient; and *Joſhua* writing his Hiſtory

in

in his old Age, he might ſpeak of the Actions of his younger time, as things done a conſiderable time ago.

*Samuel Author of* Judges, *and the beginning of* Samuel.

Nor can I think that the Books of *Judges* and *Samuel* are ſo Modern as you would pretend: That the whole Books which bear *Samuel*'s Name were wrote by *Samuel*, no body will contend, though it is probable that the former part of the firſt Book was wrote by that Prophet, who likewiſe lays the faireſt claim to the Book of *Judges*, and to that of *Ruth*. That the Book of *Judges* is very Ancient is manifeſt, becauſe it is alluded to in a *Pſalm* of *David*, which he made upon the removing the Ark. *When thou wenteſt forth before the People, when thou didſt march through the wilderneſs, the earth ſhook, the Heavens alſo dropped at the preſence of God.* Which words are an exact Imitation of *Judges* 5. 4. *Lord, when thou wenteſt out of Seir, when thou marcheſt out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, the Heavens dropped, the Clouds alſo dropped water.* And immediately after the *Pſalmiſt* ſays, *That the Mountain Sina, was moved at the preſence of the God of Iſrael*, which Words are likewiſe Copied from the Words which follow in that Chapter of *Judges*, *The mountains melted from before*

*the Lord, even that Sinai from before the Lord God of Iſrael.* And 'tis evident likewiſe, that this Book of *Judges* was wrote earlier than moſt other of the Hiſtorical Books, becauſe the Hiſtory of it is referred to 2 *Sam.* 11. 21. *Who ſmote Abimelech the ſon of Jerubbeſheth? Did not a woman caſt a piece of a mill-ſtone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez?* Which Hiſtory is Recorded, *Judg.* 9. 53. Neither it is any Objection againſt the Book of *Judges*, that the Kings of *Iſrael* are Alluded to, by ſome Expreſſions, as, *In thoſe days there was no king in Iſrael*; for if this Book was wrote by *Samuel*, as is moſt probable, he might very properly make this Remark, as living ſome time after the Monarchy was ſettled; or however, this might be only a Note of Explanation added by *Eſdras*, upon the Reviſing the Sacred Books.

Nor do the Books of *Samuel* want their evident Marks of Antiquity: They are referred to, *Pſal.* 113. 7. where a Paſſage of *Hannah*'s Song is Tranſcribed. *He raiſeth up the poor out of the duſt, and lifteth up the needy out of the dunghil, that he may ſet him with Princes, even the Princes of his people.* Which Paſſage in 1 *Sam.* 2. 8. is thus, *He raiſeth the poor out of the duſt, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghil, to ſet them among*

*among Princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.* The Hiſtory of theſe Books likewiſe is referred to, 1 *Kings* 20. 27. *So Solomon thruſt out Abiathar from being Prieſt unto the Lord, that he might fulfil the Word of the Lord, which he ſpake concerning the Houſe of Eli in Shilo.* Vid. 1 *Sam.* 2. 31. 35. As to the particular Authors of the greateſt part of theſe Books, it is not abſolutely certain who they were; the generality of the *Jews* do, with probability, aſſert, That the firſt 24 Chapters were wrote by *Samuel* himſelf, and the reſt by the Prophets *Nathan* and *Gad.* Nor is it any Objection againſt the Antiquity of theſe Books, that we find explained in them what the Word *Seer* ſignified in ancient time, whereas this may be only one of *Eſdras* his Explanatory Notes, and coming in by *Parentheſis*, looks later than the Original Text. And as for that Objection which *Spinoſa* ſo triumphs in, of the two different Relations of *David*'s being known to King *Saul*; I confeſs, I cannot ſee any thing like the jumbling together the divers Relations of two Authors. In the Sixteenth Chapter *David* is recommended to *Saul*, to Play before him, which he did, and cured his *Melancholy*, for which he had a kindneſs for *David*:

*The other Parts by* Nathan *and* Gad.

*David*: And in the Seventeenth Chapter, he comes to him to proffer his Service to Fight *Goliah*. And 'tis not much, that *Saul* did not know *David* again; for 'twas no great wonder that a King, in the great hurry of a Camp, did not exactly remember a young Musician he had formerly seen, and that too in the depth of *Melancholy*, when hardly any thing made impression upon his Mind, but only his own black Thoughts. But the former Chapter says, *Saul* had made him his Armour-bearer; and that might be only some Office about the King's Person, like our Pages or Querries, of which there might be many in number, and little Duty required, so that he might live at home in his Father's House still, and enjoy that Dignity. But after all, it is possible, that this part of the Chapter may be related proleptically out of its place, and this time of *David*'s being sent for to Cure *Saul*'s *Melancholy*, might be after his killing *Goliah*; it being usual for the *Hebrew Writers* to do so, they not tying themselves up to the exactness of the *Greek* and *Roman* Histories. But however, 'tis plain, that these are not the Relations of two different Writers, for in the Seventeenth Chapter, when *David* is described, he is said to be the Son of that *Ephrathite*, by the demonstrative *Pro-*

*noun*

*noun* חוה, to ſhew the ſame *Jeſſe* was meant, who was ſpoke of in the former Chapter.

*Kings and Chronicles a Compilation after the Captivity.*

But then, what Objection is it againſt the Truth of the Books of the *Kings* and *Chronicles*, that they were Collected out of more Ancient Memoirs? And ſuppoſe too *Eſdras* to be the Collector. The Books at firſt were wrote by Men of a Prophetick Spirit, and they were not the leſs the Word of God by being put into another Form, eſpecially by one who was a Prophet himſelf, as *Eſdras* was. Nay, ſo very ſcrupulous ſeems this Compilator to be, that he takes the very words of the Ancient Prophets, out of whoſe Memoirs he Compoſed theſe Books, as is evident from 2 *Chron.* 5. 9. where the Introduction of the Ark into the Oracle is deſcribed, and it is ſaid, *There it is unto this day.* Now either the Books of the *Chronicles* were wrote before the Captivity, under the firſt Temple, when the Ark was there, or elſe *Eſdras*, the ſuppoſed Compilator, made uſe of the very Words of the Ancienter Prophet, out of whom he Tranſcribed this Work. Either of which Suppoſitions give ſufficient Authority to theſe Books; for if the Author lived before the Captivity, he was an Eye-witneſs of many of the Matters

of

of Fact he relates; and if he lived after, we ſee he is ſo juſt to his Original Authors, as not to vary a Tittle from their Words. All that *Eſdras*, or whoever elſe the Compiler was, added of his own, was ſome Genealogical Obſervations at the beginning of the *Chronicles*, and ſome other Paſſages of little Moment, which relate to the times after the Captivity.

Ezra *wrote the Book of that Name.*

The Book of *Ezra*, all but the ſix firſt Chapters, was Compoſed by him: For *Ezra* ſpeaks expreſly in his own Perſon, as *Chap. 7. ver. 27. Bleſſed be the Lord God of our Fathers, which has put ſuch a thing into the King's heart, to beautifie the Houſe of the Lord, which is in Jeruſalem, and hath extended his Mercy unto me, before the King and his Counſellors, and before all the King's mighty Princes: And I was ſtrengthened as the hand of the Lord my God was upon me, and I gathered together out of Iſrael chief Men to go up with me.* And that we may be certain, from the Inſcription of the Book, that *Eſdras* wrote this, you may ſee that *Artaxerxes* his Decree, which he ſo magnifies God for, is directed to *Ezra*, where the Words [*Thou Ezra, &c.*] are uſed. Now why ſhould any one who ſpeaks ſo expreſly in his own Perſon, be denied the being

being Author of a Book, to whom by all Antiquity it has been attributed? Indeed, the firſt ſix Chapters ſeem to be wrote by another Perſon, who came over from *Babylon*, in the firſt Return, upon the Decree of *Cyrus*, which *Eſdras* did not; for he came over with thoſe *Jews* who returned upon *Artaxerxes* his Edict, and wrote the Hiſtory of that, which he added to the ſix firſt Chapters of this Book, and gives the Hiſtory of the firſt Return; ſo that both theſe added together, make the compleat Hiſtory of the *Jewiſh* Reſtoration, the former part of which *Eſdras* ſaved himſelf the trouble of Writing anew, it being done ready to his hand by ſome one elſe, and which he approved of.

*Nehemiah Author of that Book.*

That *Nehemiah* was the Author of the Book that goes under his Name, there is little reaſon to doubt, ſince it carries his Name, and the *Jewiſh* Church has all along attributed it to him. The Son of *Syrach* mentions his building the Walls of *Jeruſalem*, recited in that Hiſtory. *And among the Elect was Nehemias, whoſe Renown was great, who raiſed up for us the Walls that were fallen, and ſet up the Gates, and the Bars, and raiſed up our Ruines again*, Eccl. 49. 13. And 'tis plain that the Book of *Nehemiah* was not only

only received into the *Jewish Canon*, but went under *Nehemiah* his Name, when the Books of the *Maccabees* were wrote, as is plain from 2 *Mac.* 2. 13. *The same things were also reported in the Writings and Commentaries of Nehemias, and how he, Founding a Library, gathered together the Acts of the Kings and the Prophets, and of David, and the Epistles of the Kings concerning the Holy Gifts.* Nor is *Spinosa*'s Argument any ways considerable, whereby he would prove that *Nehemiah* could not write this, because *Jadduah*, or *Jaddus* his Name is mentioned, who lived so long afterwards; for it is obvious to any one who looks upon that Passage, that it is in all probability an Interpolation after the first Writing of that Book, by some one who had a mind to make the Genealogy of the Priests compleat to his time; for if *Nehemiah* had been a counterfeit Piece, no Forger could be so silly to make *Nehemiah* speak of so many Generations of Priests after his time.

*Job.* The Author of the Book of *Job* is indeed uncertain, but being received into the *Jewish* Canon, must be supposed to be wrote by an Inspired Writer. The Author of it, whosoever he be, is very Ancient, and lived, as is most probable, before the Promulgation of the *Jewish Law*.

for

for there are not any Traces to be found of the *Moſaical Precepts* in the whole Book; and we may find ſomethings contrary to them, as particularly *Job*'s Offering Sacrifice himſelf after the Patriarchal manner, which was allowed only to the Prieſts under the *Judaical Law*. Neither has the Conjecture of *Grotius* much Solidity, who would have it wrote by a *Jew*, upon account that the place where *Job* lived, is called the *Eaſt*, as the *Jews* uſed to call *Arabia*; becauſe any other Perſon, who lived *Weſt-ward* in Situation, might call *Job*'s Country the *Eaſt*, or the Inhabitants of that place themſelves might call it the *Eaſt*, in reſpect of the *Weſtern* Diviſion of *Aſia*. It is not improbable, which ſome Conjecture, that it was wrote by *Moſes*, during his Abode in *Egypt*, or in his Flight into the Land of *Midian*, before he had promulged the *Judaical Law*; and his deſign might be to hearten up the *Jews* under the Severities of the *Egyptian Bondage*, by ſhewing the Gracious Deſigns of God's Providence, and that He oftentimes lays His ſharpeſt Afflictions upon his beſt Servants. That the whole Story is an Allegorical Fable, muſt in no ways be allowed, for the Teſtimonies of *Ezekiel* and St. *James*, who Alledge *Job* as a real Perſon, prove the con-

trary of this Opinion: Nay, from hence it appears, That the Book of *Job* was generally read among the *Jews* in *Ezekiel*'s time, which was before the composing of *Esdras* his Canon.

But as for *Spinosa*'s Arguments, to prove this Book a Gentile Composition, they are vain and frivolous, and wholly answerable to the Paradoxical Humour of that Unbeliever. What a pretty Fancy it is to think that the Author of *Job* imitated the Poetical Fables of the Convention of the Gods, and the Story of *Momus*? But any thing may be said to make the Scripture look ridiculous. Let us turn to the Fourth Book of *Homer*, and see how he describes the Congress of his Heathen Deities.

Οἱ δὲ Θεοὶ πὰς Ζηνὶ καθήμενοι ἠγορόωντο
Χρυσέῳ ἐν δαπέδῳ, μετὰ δὲ σφισι πότνια Ἥβη
Νέκταρ ἐωνοχόει· τοὶ δ' χρυσείοις δεπάεσσι
Δειδέχα]' ἀλλήλοις——

*The Gods were all sat in Counsels round* Jupiter, *upon the Golden Pavement, where* Hebe *fill'd them Nectar in Golden Cups, in which they drank round to one another.* Now a witty Atheist might make sport enough with such a jolly Meeting of the Gods as this; and one would think that *Homer* had only a Mind to expose them by such an odd Description.

Deſcription. But when the Author of the Book of *Job* ſays, *That there was a day when the ſons of God came to preſent themſelves before the Lord.* What is there in this, that is not agreeable to the Dignity and Majeſty of the Divine Nature? This Writer does not ſay theſe Angels are called to Counſel, as *Homer*'s Gods were, but to Duty and Service. And not only the *Jewiſh* Writers ſpeak of Angels *ſtanding before the throne of God*, but the *Pagan Theologers* ſay the ſame in their Hymns, *Vid. Orph. Hymn.* and allow Demi-urgical Powers, and other Subordinate Dæmons, that are Aſſiſtant to the Supreme Deity. And as for the Story of *Momus*, that ill-natur'd ſour God, who would do no good himſelf, and was uſed to Carp at whatever was done by any one elſe, his Story is ſo little Famous even amongſt the *Greek* and *Latine* Mythologers and Poets, that it is not ſuppoſable that an *Eaſtern* Writer ſhould take a Hint from ſo obſcure, and ſo little known a Character as this. And as for that little Witticiſm of your Author, That the Stile of *Job* ſavours more of a *Man at eaſe in his Cloſet, than of an afflicted Man lying languiſhing in the Aſhes*; why, no body ſuppoſes that theſe were the very Words which *Job* uſed in his Miſery: We all own that theſe things are

fitted out in a Poetical Dreſs, and are not repreſented ſuch as really they were, but in ſuch Artificial Characters as it pleaſed the Holy Spirit of God to recommend Patience under Afflictions to Mankind, and to Vindicate the Juſtice of Providence in the Inſtances of Afflicted Piety.

*The Pſalms.* The *Pſalms* are no late Compoſition, but moſt of them wrote before the Captivity. Indeed we ought not, as ſome do, to attribute them all to *David*, when their ſeveral Titles do allot them to other Authors, although a great ſhare of them are owing to that Inſpired Prince. It is certain that in the Antienteſt Times, both after and before the Deluge, Holy Men were wont to ſing the Praiſes of God, for ſingular Mercies received, in Hymns; the Care of Compoſing which, Men of Parts, and a Prophetick Spirit, were pleaſed to take upon themſelves, as is plain in the Inſtances of *Moſes* and *Miriam*. *Deborah*, *David*, *Solomon*, *&c.* Theſe Hymns were wont not only to be learn'd by Pious People, as helps to their Devotion, but were delivered to the *Levites*, to be laid up in the *Archives* of the *Temple*, as *Joſephus* writes, *Ant. Lib.* 3. *Cap.* 1. and out of theſe the *Levites* made their choice, to ſing upon ſet Occaſions in the Temple. And of theſe

theſe there were a vaſt number gathered together, Compoſed by the Prophets, of ſo many preceding Ages in the Temple of *Jeruſalem*, before the burning of it by the *Chaldeans*; for *Solomon* himſelf is recorded to have Compoſed above a Thouſand. Of theſe Hymns a great many were carried, by ſome Devout Men, into the Captivity, and brought back again with them upon their Reſtoration, which, together with ſome others that were Compoſed at *Babylon*, were by *Eſdras*, and the Great Synagogue, formed into this Book of *Pſalms*, which we now have.

But though the whole Book of *Pſalms*, in the Form they are now in, be not older than *Eſdras*, yet many of them were known by the Ancient Prophets who lived before. For a part of the firſt *Pſalm* is, in a manner, Tranſcribed by *Jeremiah*, *Jer.* 17. 7. *Bleſſed is the man that truſteth in the Lord, and whoſe hope the Lord is, for he ſhall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that ſpreadeth out her roots by the river; and ſhall not ſee when heat cometh, but her leaf ſhall be green, and ſhall not be careful in the year of drought, neither ſhall ceaſe from yielding fruit.* The Words in the 98 *Pſalm*, *His right hand, and holy arm hath gotten him the victory, and all the ends of the earth have ſeen the ſalvation of*

*our God*, are cited *Isa.* 52. 10. *The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eye of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.* That of *Jeremiah*, Lam. 5. 19. *Thou, Lord, remainest for ever, and thy throne from generation to generation*, is taken out of *Psal.* 101. that of *Isaiah*, 50. 9. *They all shall wax old as a garment*, is taken out of the 101 *Psalm* likewise. So that the *Psalms* are so far from being modern Compositions, that they are some of the oldest and most unquestionable Parts of Scripture.

Solomon *Author of the* Proverbs.

There is little doubt to be made but that the Book of *Proverbs* was wrote by King *Solomon*, whose Name it bears in the Title: The first Twenty Four Chapters seem to be the Original Collection made by *Solomon* himself, and was the beginning of a greater Work, which was destroyed with the Temple at the Captivity. And the following Chapters are a Collection made by others, as appears by the beginning of the Twenty fifth Chapter. *The Proverbs of Solomon, which the Men of Hezekiah, King of Judah, coppied out.* By the Men of *Hezekiah* are meant some Persons which the King employed for this purpose, they were probably *Eliakim*, the Son of *Hilkiah*, and *Shebnah*

*Shebnah* the Scribe, and *Joah* the Son of *Aſaph* the Recorder, who were Secretaries to *Hezekiah*, and who might poſſibly likewiſe have the Aſſiſtance of the Prophet *Iſaiah*. This Collection holds to the Thirtieth Chapter, which has the Title of *Agur*, but who this *Agur* was is uncertain; he does not ſeem to be *Solomon*, from the mean Character he gives himſelf. *Surely I am more bruitiſh than any man, and have not the underſtanding of a man; I neither learned wiſdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy*, Prov. 30. 2. Which is no ways agreeable to the great Wiſdom God gave *Solomon*, 1 *Kings* 4. 29. nor indeed to that Character which *Solomon*, in *Eccleſiaſtes*, gives of himſelf. *I have gotten more wiſdom than all they that have been before me in Jeruſalem; yea, my heart hath great experience of wiſdom and knowledge*, Eccl. 1. 16. The laſt Chapter, which bears the Name of *Lemuel*, muſt likewiſe be wrote by King *Solomon*, who either was called by his Mother, in his Childhood, *Lemuel*, or on purpoſe took this diſguiſed Name. This Chapter ſeems to be made up of ſome wiſe Inſtructions which his Mother *Bathſheba* had taught him when he was a Child.

But, I confeſs, I don't underſtand *Spinoſa*'s Logick, when he Argues, That the Collection of the *Proverbs* is not older than *Joſiah*'s time; *becauſe* the Men of *Hezekiah* Collected ſome of them. Why, don't all the World know that *Joſiah* was the Great Grand-ſon of *Hezekiah*, and Flouriſhed nigh an hundred Years after him? So that if all the Collection of the *Proverbs* were owing to the *Men of Hezekiah*, they were an hundred Years older than *Joſiah*. Certainly ſuch a great Pretender to Reaſon never made uſe of ſuch a [*Becauſe*] before.

*Eccleſiaſtes.* Neither is there any material Argument againſt *Solomon*'s being Author of the Book *Eccleſiaſtes*. *Grotius* indeed would have it to be wrote by *Zerubbabel*, becauſe of ſome *Syriack* and *Chaldee* Words which are found therein; but 'tis poſſible that theſe Words might have crept into the *Hebrew Tongue* in *Solomon*'s time, or at leaſt, *Solomon*, by his Converſation with ſo many ſtrange Women, might have learned them. But the great Character of Wiſdom which this Author lays claim to; his Building Houſes and Planting Vineyards, his making Gardens and Fiſh-pools, his gathering ſo much Silver and Gold, *&c.* which he ſpeaks of, *Chap.* 1. is the peculiar Character of *Solomon*, and which ſuch a poor

poor Prince as *Zerubbabel* could not pretend to. Neither is it any Objection againſt the Divinity of this Book, that there are ſome Expreſſions that look like the Epicurean Notion of Providence, for the Author Diſputes the Arguments on both ſides Academically, and determines at laſt on the true ſide, as appears by the cloſe of the Book. *Let us hear the concluſion of the whole matter, Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God ſhall bring every work into judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

*Canticles.*

The Synagogue of the *Jews*, and the Church of Chriſt, have all along attributed the *Canticles* to the ſame King *Solomon*, and the Title of this Song ſpeaks the ſame. And though ſome Hereticks of old, and ſome Anabaptiſts of late, have look'd upon it only as an ordinary Love-Song, yet the Pious in all Ages have eſteemed it an Allegorical Dialogue between God and his Church.

*Iſaiah.*

There is no Reaſon but to think that the Book of *Iſaiah* was wrote by that Prophet, for the beginning of the Book bears his Name. *The prophecy of Iſaiah the ſon of Amos, which he ſaw concerning Judah and Jeruſalem, in the days of Uzziah,*

*ah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, Kings of Judah.* Nor can it with any Probability or Truth be ſaid, That the Prophecies were uttered by *Iſaiah*, and the Book wrote by another Hand: For the Prophet is expreſly commanded by God to write his Prophecy himſelf. *Go now, write it before them in a table, note it in a book, that it may be for time to come, even for ever and ever.* Beſides, *Iſaiah* oftentimes in this Prophecy, ſpeaks in the firſt Perſon, which a Compiler could not with Propriety do. *In the year that Uzziah died, I ſaw alſo the Lord ſitting upon a throne*, Iſa. 6. 1. *Moreover the Lord ſaid unto me*, Chap. 8. 1. 'Tis obſervable, that this Prophet was of Royal Extraction, his Father was *Amos*, not one of the Twelve Prophets, but the Brother of King *Azariah*, which noble Education gave his Stile a turn above the reſt of the Prophets: He was Sawn aſunder by a wooden Saw, as the *Jews* relate, under the Tyrannical Reign of King *Manaſſes*, to which moſt probably the Author of the *Hebrews* alludes, *Heb.* 11. 37. *They were ſawn aſunder.*

That this Prophecy is older than many other parts of Scripture is evident, becauſe almoſt two Chapters of it, *Chap.* 37, and 38. are well nigh, *verbatim*, Tranſcribed

in

in the Second Book of the *Kings*, Chap. 19, *&c.* and ſome Expreſſions are imitated by *Jeremiah*. *Every head ſhall be bald, and every beard, and upon all the hands ſhall be cuttings, and upon the loins ſackcloth. There ſhall be lamentation generally upon all the houſe tops of Moab, and in the ſtreets thereof, for I have broken Moab like a veſſel, wherein is no pleaſure, ſaith the Lord.* Which is an exact imitation of *Iſa.* 15. 2. *Moab ſhall howl over Nebo and Medeba; on all their heads ſhall be baldneſs, and every beard cut off. In their ſtreets they ſhall gird themſelves with ſackcloth, on the tops of their houſes, and in their ſtreets, every one ſhall howl, weeping abundantly.* And ſo again, *Jer.* 50. 2. *Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces, her Idols are confounded, her Images are broken in pieces.* Which ſeems to be Coppied from *Iſaiah* 46. 1. *Bel boweth down, Nebo ſtoopeth.* And theſe Words, *Iſaiah* 24. 18. *He that fleeth from the noiſe of the fear, ſhall fall into the pit, and he that cometh out of the midſt of the pit, ſhall be taken in the ſnare*, are found without any variation, *Jer.* 48. 4. which is ſufficient to ſhew, that in *Jeremy*'s time the Prophecy of *Iſaiah* was extant.

But as for *Spinoſa*'s Objection, That 'tis Suſpicious that this is not *Iſaiah*'s Book, becauſe here are none of the Acts of *Uzziah* in this

this Prophecy, whoſe Acts, 2 *Chron.* 26. 22. he is ſaid to have wrote; this Objection is ſufficiently anſwered, by ſaying, *The Acts of Uzziah* were another Book of the Prophet's Writing, which by the Title ſeems to be a perfect Hiſtorical Book of the Reign of that King, and to be nothing like this Book of Prophecies we are now upon.

*Jeremiah.* That *Jeremiah* wrote this Prophecy himſelf, may be known from the Inſcription of his Book. *The words of Jeremiah, the ſon of Hilkiah, of the Prieſts which were in Anenoth, in the land of Benjamin.* And afterwards, in ſeveral places, he ſpeaks in his own proper perſon. *And the word of the Lord came to me.* And afterwards; *And the Lord ſent his hand, and touched my mouth.* And that he wrote his Prophecy himſelf, is plain from *Jer.* 29. 1. *Now theſe are the words of the letter which Jeremiah the Prophet ſent from Jeruſalem, unto the reſidue of the Elders which were carried away captives.* And from Chap. 30. 2. *Thus ſpeaketh the Lord God of Iſrael, ſaying, Write all the words which I have ſpoken unto thee in a book.* And again, in Chap. 51. *v.* 60. *And Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil which ſhould come upon Babylon.* And moreover, he expreſly tells who was his

Amanu-

Amanuenſis, who wrote the words from his Mouth. *The word which Jeremiah the Prophet ſpake unto Baruch, the ſon of Neriah, when he had written theſe words in a Book at the mouth of Jeremiah*, Jer. 45, 1. Certainly no Teſtimony can be more poſitive than this, That this Prophet wrote this Prophecy himſelf. The Prophecies indeed do lie ſome-what obſcure in the Book, but however they may be reduced to theſe following Heads: The firſt contains the Prophecies to the time of King *Jehoiakim*; the Second under King *Jehoiakim*, full of new and grievous Comminations, after King *Jehoiakim* had ordered the firſt Book of Prophecies to be cut and burned: Then are ſub-joined thoſe Prophecies which *Jeremiah* Predicted after the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, 'till the time that he and *Baruch* were carried into *Egypt*, which Prophecies do terminate at the laſt Clauſe in the Fifty Firſt Chapter; *Thus far the words of Jeremiah*. It is obſervable, That the Prophecies which were Predicted in King *Jehoiakim*'s Reign, are placed laſt, after others, which in order of Time ſhould come afterwards, and thoſe in the Reign of *Zedekiah* are inſerted in the midſt of others. But, however, this might eaſily come to paſs, by the negligence of Tranſcribers, without any

any Derogation to the Authority of the Book, or being forced to own *Spinoſa*'s Suppoſition, That this Book is only an Extract out of divers others. For what though the Parts of this Book be ſome-what confuſed, how does that make it to be a Collection out of other Books? Why may not the Parts of one Book be diſordered, as well as pieces out of divers be confuſedly put together? But you ſay, there are contradictions in it, and the cauſe of *Jeremiah*'s Impriſonment related divers ways, which the ſame Author would not have done. The ſame Argument will hold likewiſe againſt a Compiler, who, to be ſure, read what he Tranſcribed, and therefore would never have ſet down two contradictory Stories in two Chapters, which follow one another. But after all, here is no Contradiction in this Matter; and nothing but a blind or perverſe Malice could make one. In the 37*th* Chapter it is recorded, That *Jeremiah* was taken up upon Suſpicion of Flying to the *Chaldeans*, as he was going into the Country, into the Land of *Benjamin*, and caſt into the Priſon of *Jonathan*, where becauſe he continued Prophecying of the certain Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, he is ordered to be thrown into the Dungeon of *Malchiah*. But this Critick is a little miſtaken, when

when he makes the 37*th.* Chapter to be a Continuation of the 21*th.* For in the firſt *Jeremy* ſpeaks to *Paſhur* and *Zephaniah*; in the laſt to *Sephatiah*, *Gedaliah*, *Jucal* and *Paſhur*. And ſo he is when he finds a Falſity in the Prediction of *Jeremy*, that *Zedekiah* ſhould die in Peace; for all the Falſity is in our Philoſophers ſaying ſo. All that *Jeremy* Propheſied came exactly to paſs: *Thou ſhalt not*, ſays the Prophet, *eſcape out of his hand, but ſhalt ſurely be taken*, &c. *Yet hear the word of the Lord, O Zedekiah King of Judah, thus ſaith the Lord of thee, Thou ſhalt not die by the Sword, but thou ſhalt die in Peace.* Now to die in Peace here, is in Oppoſition to dying by the Sword, or dying a violent Death, which *Zedekiah* did not: For, I hope, that all blind Men do not die violent Deaths; and in this Senſe, *Zedekiah*, though he had loſt his Eyes, yet being ſuffered to die a natural Death, he might properly be ſaid to *die in Peace.*

That the Prophecy of *Ezekiel* was wrote by the Prophet of that Name, the *Jews* do univerſally agree; beſides, his Name is Prefixt to the Book; and he ſpeaks always in the firſt Perſon, *The Lord ſaid unto me, Son of man*, &c. He was the Son of *Buz*, a Prieſt, of the Race of the High-Prieſts, and Cotemporary with *Jere-* *Ezekiel.*

*Jeremiah*; he was carried away into *Chaldea* with *Zedekiah*, and began to *Prophecy* by the River *Chobar*, five Years after his Captivity, and *Propheſied* twenty Years, and was afterwards killed by a Prince of the *Jewiſh Blood*, for his warning him againſt Idolatry, as they tell us. That *Ezekiel*'s Prophecy is but a Fragment of a greater Work, is but a Fancy of *Spinoſa*; for the ſeemingly abrupt beginning of his Book, does not prove any ſuch thing: For tho' he begins, *Now it came to paſs, in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, and the fifth day of the month*, without mentioning any King's Reign, yet this may be underſtood, as *R. Kimchi* Interprets it, of the *Jubilee*; or, as *Jonathan* Paraphraſes, ſince the time when *Hilkiah* found the Law. But let this *Epocha* of Time be what it will, it was ſome very remarkable one, which the *Jews* at that time reckoned from. It ſhould ſeem that the *Jews* being Captivated, thought it either not fit, or ſafe, to reckon by the Reigns of their own Kings, and they were not yet enough Reconciled to the Conquerors, to reckon by their Reigns; and therefore they took ſome other Mark of Time to date their Computations of Time, which might be liable to no Exception.

That

That the Ancient *Jews* looked upon *Daniel* as the Author of this Book, and to be an Inſpired Prophet, is evident from this Paſſage of *Joſephus*. *Whatſoever Books* Daniel *left wrote by him, the ſame are read at this day with us, and we do believe from them, that* Daniel *had a Communication with God.* And as for thoſe Arguments which ſome Modern *Jews* make uſe of, to prove he was not properly a Prophet, are fond and ſilly; for let God Communicate Himſelf to him how He will, yet ſtill he is a Prophet, becauſe he Predicts Future Things, and thoſe in ſo plain and expreſs a manner, as few of the other Prophets are comparable to him for this. And this *Joſephus* was Conſcious of, and affirms the like. For he not only calls him *One of the greateſt of the Prophets*, but prefers him before the reſt. *For*, ſays he, *he does not only Predict Future Things, but limits the time in which they are to happen. And when other Prophets Predict Evil Things, and for this reaſon raiſed the hatred of the common People againſt them*, Daniel *was the fore-teller to them of good things.* But whereas *Spinoſa* ſays, That this Book was wrote after the *Maccabees* time, either to prove the Reſurrection againſt the *Sadducees*, or elſe to ſhew how *Daniel*'s Prophecies were fulfil- *Daniel.*

led, to Confirm the People in their Religion, and to teach them not to Deſpair in Calamities. I Anſwer, This is all confident Aſſertion, without any ground of Truth, or ſhadow of Proof; and I may as well ſay *Demoſthenes* his Orations were wrote by *Julius Cæſar*, and his Speeches againſt *Philip* were made to hearten up the *Cæſareans* againſt *Pompey*'s Army.

*Twelve Prophets.* I ſhall not have time to run over the Characters and Authorities of the reſt of the Prophets, it is enough to ſhew that all theſe were very early received into the Jewiſh Canon of Scripture: And to do this, I need only appeal to a remarkable Paſſage in the Book *Eccleſiaſticus*; where after Praiſes beſtowed on *Ezekiel*, and other Prophets and Worthies of *Iſrael*, there are theſe Words: *And of the Twelve Prophets, let the Memorial be bleſſed, let their Bones flouriſh again out of their place; for they comforted Jacob, and delivered them by aſſured Hope*, Eccluſ. 4. 10. So that it is plain, in this Author's time, the *Old Teſtament* was in the ſame order it is now, and that all theſe Twelve Prophets were received into the Canon. As for the particular Objection againſt *Hoſea*, that you urge, as if his Book was not Genuine, becauſe it is not big enough to contain

contain the Prophecies of ſo long a Life. To this we need but ſay, Why is it neceſſary that *Hoſea* ſhould write all his Prophecies? Or, why ſhould all his Prophecies come to our Hands?

But your laſt Stroke at the *Old Teſtament* is the fierceſt, *viz.* That all the Hiſtorical Books of Scripture, and moſt of the others, ſeem to be wrote by the ſame Hand, and with the ſame deſign, *viz.* To ſhew the Fate of the *Jewiſh Nation*, in keeping, or obeying *Moſes* his Laws, *&c.* never mentioning any thing elſe. But I hope this is only ſeemingly ſo to *Spinoſa*, and other prejudiced Unbelievers; I am confident others have quite another Proſpect of theſe Matters.

For, 1. All theſe Books do not ſeem to be wrote by one Hand; for the Stile, Compoſition, particular Affections and Opinions, do ſeem as different, as in any divers Writers can appear. Does not every Man find a plain difference in his Palate, when he reads a Chapter of *Nehemiah*, from what he does when he reads one in the *Pentateuch*, although it be in our Engliſh Tranſlation. Do *Ezekiel* or *Daniel* read any thing like the Books of *Kings* or *Samuel?* If they had all been Compoſed by one Hand, there would not have been any thing that looked

like a Contrariety; for the ſame Author would have been ſo wary in his Expreſſions of the ſame thing, as he would not have given the leaſt ground for ſuch Cavils.

2. Neither is there any ground to think this one Hand to be *Eſdras*. He is ſaid indeed to *Explain the Law, and give the Senſe of the Scriptures*, Neh. 8. 9. But I think there is a great deal of difference between that, and making them. But if *Eſdras*, or any other Hand, had been to make this Law, or to write this Hiſtory, there is no reaſon to think they would write it as theſe were wrote. Had a cunning Jewiſh Prieſt been to make a new Law for the People of the Jews, as I obſerved before, he would never have invented ſuch a troubleſome one as this, ſo Various in its Particulars, ſo Nice in its Obſervations, ſo Severe in its Sanctions, almoſt in every thing ſo very Rigid, and ſo very Difficult, that a Man could never reaſonably expect that a whole Nation ſhould bow their Necks to ſuch a Yoke. He would not have made the Office of the Prieſt-hood ſuch a burdenſome Office; as to attend upon the Daily Sacrifice, when a little Monthly, or Annual Service might have done as well. If he had invented all the Hiſtory, he would have omitted the Faults, to be ſure, of the great Men of the

the Jewiſh Nation; he would never have told how baſely the Firſt Founders of the Jewiſh Tribes betray'd their Brethren; what perfidious Homicides two of them were, and another Inceſtuous. In ſhort, the whole Series of Hiſtory would have been quite otherways contrived, if it had been only a Jew's Invention.

3. But it is a very Falſe Aſſertion to ſay, That nothing is mentioned in theſe Books, but what relates to one Deſign, namely, to ſhew the Fate of the Jewiſh Nation, upon their Obedience or Diſobedience of *Moſes* his Law. I grant, that this is a true Deduction from the Jewiſh Hiſtory, but its wonderfully unlikely, that all theſe Books were wrote purely for that End; for one might have made that Truth out, without an hundredth part of the trouble which theſe Books coſt Writing. But how many things in Scripture are Recorded, which have no Relation to the Jewiſh Nation, and which make as much for the Gentiles as the Jews? What does it relate to the Jews more than the reſt of the World, that the Hiſtory of the Creation or Deluge, ſhould be given in Scripture? What does it ſignifie to the Jewiſh Affairs to have the Account Recorded of the Leaders of the Firſt Colonies after the Flood? What does it ſigni-

ſie to the Affairs of that Nation, that the early Inventors of ſome uſeful Arts are related, who were not Jews, but lived long before the Jewiſh Nation had a Name, as *Jubal*, *Tubal Cain*, *&c.* Therefore I am amazed at *Spinoſa*'s confident Aſſertion, That nothing is mentioned in Scripture-Hiſtory but what relates to the Jewiſh Affairs. For the Hiſtory of the firſt Two Thouſand Years of the World, relate no more to the *Jews* than it does to the *Engliſh*. If a *Jew* had contrived it purely for the ſake of his own Nation, why did he not make the Jewiſh Religion Two Thouſand Years older than the Scriptural-Hiſtory does? It was altogether as eaſie to have made it as old as *Adam*, as well as to have ſettled its beginning in *Abraham*'s time: He would in all probability have made *Seth* the Firſt Circumciſed, and all the Ceremonial Law of the *Jews*, as old as the Firſt Sacrifice. This any *Jew*, that was diſpoſed to Counterfeit, would have done; for it is unaccountable why ſuch a Forging *Jew* ſhould give the *Gentiles Religion* Two Thouſand Years Antiquity beyond the *Jewiſh*; as 'tis plain the Writer of the *Moſaical* Books does. Therefore I ſay, 'tis a plain Proof that theſe Hiſtories were not wrote only to ſupport the Religion of the

*Jews*,

*Jews*, and for the Honour of that Nation; but to relate plain Matter of Fact and Truths, uſeful to all Ages, without any ſuch regard.

*Phil.* But pray, Good Sir, upon Suppoſition that theſe Books are not Counterfeits, but wrote by thoſe whoſe Names they bear, How do we know that they were Inſpired Books, and wrote by the Supernatural Influence of God's Spirit? Some of theſe Men might be called Prophets, becauſe in an Illiterate Age they were able to Write and Read; as among ſome People, any one who is ſome-what a better Proficient in Learning is reckoned a Conjurer. Now this might be all the ordinary People's Fancy and Opinion; but how do you prove that theſe Books were Indited by the Holy Ghoſt? Or, how are we ſure that the *Jews* did not take into their Canon, inſtead of Inſpired Authors, ſome ordinary Secular Hiſtorians?

*Cred.* All who underſtand the Nature of the Jewiſh Common-wealth and Religion, know how impoſſible it was for any one to arrive to the Character of a Prophet, without being really one. None could pretend to that Character without the Credentials of

Miracles; and no one dared to do it, without ſufficient Authority, by reaſon of the Severe Puniſhment which was entailed upon Falſe Prophets: So that the power of Miracles was as much a Mark of a Prophet in that Church, as Letters of Orders are Proof of any ones being of the Miniſtry in this. The Sermons, or Speeches of ſuch Prophetick Men, were always looked upon as the *Oracles of GOD*, and Dictated by the Divine Spirit. You Ludicrouſly Buffoon the Matter, when you make as if their Learning gave them that great Character; for it was not their Literate Education they were Revered for, but their Revelation: For there were ſeveral Men of Letters among the *Jews*, as the *Scribes*, who yet never pretended to Prophecy, though perhaps they might be more Elegant Writers than the Prophets. It was very well known among the *Jews*, at the time of Forming their Canon, what Books among them were written by Inſpired Men, and what by Ordinary Authors; and there is no doubt but that *Eſdras* himſelf, being a Prophet, was eſpecially directed by the Holy Spirit of God, in the Choice of his Collection; though it were ſufficient if he uſed only Humane Caution himſelf, with the Aſſiſtance of the Synagogue in which he Preſided,

ed, and which were Convened for this very purpoſe. For it is not to be ſuppoſed, but that thoſe Holy and Learned Men, who lived ſo nigh to the time of the Prophets, muſt needs know what Authors were Inſpired, and what were not.

*Phil.* But ſtill I have great Reaſon to doubt of the Authority of the Books of the *New Teſtament*: Indeed theſe Books bear ſpecious Names, as being wrote by the Apoſtles of Jeſus Chriſt; but it is very much to be queſtioned, whether they were wrote by thoſe Authors. There have been formerly ſo many Spurious Books which have pretended to the like great Authority, that one may very well queſtion, whether theſe are not of the ſame Rank. What a world of Goſpels were handed about in the Primitive Church? Some were for the Goſpel according to the *Egyptians*, others for that according to the *Hebrews*, and others according to the Twelve Apoſtles; ſome read a Goſpel according to St. *Peter*, ſome according to St. *Paul*, and others according to St. *Matthias*, the Goſpel of St. *Andrew*, St. *Bartholomew*, St. *Thomas*, St. *Philip*, of *Thadeus*, *Barnabas* and *Nicodemus*, and the Travels of *Paul* and *Thecla*, beſides other Books which pretended to a like Character;

The

The Acts of *Andrew*, *Philip*, and *Thomas*, with a number more of the ſame kind. Now how ſhall any tell, among all theſe, that our Four Evangeliſts are the true ones? why may not theſe be Spurious as well as the reſt? And why may not the Epiſtles of St. *Paul*, and the other Apoſtles, be as well Forged, as other things in their Name formerly were?

*Cred.* The ſame Reaſons that prove thoſe other Goſpels, and pretended Apoſtolical Writings to be Spurious, prove theſe to be Genuine: For the Church of God having Examined thoſe, and finding them to be contrary to the received Faith, and not to have been delivered down by ſufficient Authority, have thought fit to reject them; whilſt they have all along Embraced theſe with the greateſt Veneration. Thoſe Pieces have been received indeed by ſome particular Men and Sects of Chriſtians, but never by the Univerſal Church, whilſt theſe have been looked upon as Canonical Scripture by the Church in all Ages. Thoſe were like ſome particular upſtart Opinions, which have prevailed among ſome Men for a while, whilſt theſe, like the common Dictates of Reaſon, have been entertained every where, and by All. So that we may with

with as much ground queſtion the Univerſal Principles of Reaſon, for the ſake of a number of Paradoxical Opinions, as to doubt of the Genuine Goſpels, upon account of thoſe Counterfeit Ones.

St. *Matthew.*

The Firſt of theſe is, The Goſpel according to St. *Matthew*, which according to the Teſtimony of the moſt Ancient in the Chriſtian Church, *viz. Papias*, *Irenæus*, *&c.* that Apoſtle wrote in *Hebrew*. There are Authorities brought out of this Goſpel by *Clemens Romanus*, by *Barnabas*, in his Epiſtle, by *Ignatius* and *Polycarp*, by *Juſtin Martyr*, and *Irenæus*; nay, this Goſpel was owned by the Heretick *Cerinthus*, who lived in the Apoſtolick Times, and who rejected all the reſt, becauſe they contradicted his Hereſie. It was very early Tranſlated out of *Hebrew* or *Syriack*, into *Greek*, in the Apoſtolick Times; and St. *Jerom* certifies, That in his time he ſaw a *Hebrew* Copy of it in the Library of *Cæſarea*.

St. *Mark.*

The Goſpel according to St. *Mark*, was wrote by a Diſciple of St. *Peter*, who was a different Perſon from that *Mark* mentioned in the Epiſtles of St. *Paul*. *Irenæus* ſays, He Compoſed this Goſpel out of the Sermons of St. *Peter*, and others, that St. *Peter* approved it, where-

wherefore ſome have called it the Goſpel of St. *Peter*, as *Tertullian* writes. And *Juſtin Martyr* quoted ſeveral Paſſages out of this Goſpel, as Canonical Scripture.

St. *Luke*. The Goſpel of St. *Luke* was wrote by a Diſciple of St. *Paul*, of that Name, a Phyſician by Profeſſion, of the City of *Antioch*, and one who was well verſed in the *Greek* Tongue. He was no immediate Diſciple of Chriſt, whatſoever ſome pretend, becauſe he ſays, what he wrote he learn'd from others. 'Tis plain from his Preface, That there were ſeveral other Goſpels extant in his time, and probably ſome of thoſe Spurious ones before mentioned; which made him, as *Euſebius* ſays, undertake the Evangelick Hiſtory, to reſcue it out of bad hands, having been informed of the particular Circumſtances of thoſe Tranſactions by Eye-Witneſſes, and particularly being aided by the Aſſiſtance of his Tutor St. *Paul*. Therefore it is ſuppoſed, that St. *Paul* means this Hiſtory, when he ſays, *According to my Goſpel*; and for this Reaſon he gives St. *Luke* this *Elogium*, *Whoſe praiſe is in the Goſpel*. This Goſpel is quoted by *Clemens Romanus*, and the Epiſtle of *Barnabas* has ſomething out of it. *Irenæus* owns it, and ſo do the Hereticks *Cerdo* and *Marcion*, who admit of none

none elſe. The ſame St. *Luke* wrote the Acts of the Apoſtles, as appears from his Preface to *Theophilus*; and the Antiquity of this Book is ſufficiently proved, becauſe it was rejected by the Heretick *Cerinthus*, who lived in the Apoſtle's time.

*Acts of the Apoſtles.*

That St. *John*'s Goſpel was wrote by the Apoſtle of that Name, is the joint Voice of Antiquity. It is quoted by *Juſtin Martyr*, who lived the next Age after St. *John*, as Authentick Scripture; and Authorities out of the ſame are made uſe of by *Irenæus*. And *Clemens* of *Alexandria* writes, That it was a Tradition he had received from his Predeceſſors, that St. *John*, laſt of all, wrote his Goſpel. Nay, the Coppies of that Goſpel muſt be ſo common, as to be viewed by the Heathen in that Age; for *Amelius* the *Platonick Philoſopher*, cites the firſt words of the Goſpel of St. *John*, whom he calls, *That Barbarian*, and he lived not above Threeſcore or Fourſcore Years after St. *John*.

*Goſpel of St.* John.

The firſt of the Epiſtles is unanimouſly, by all Antiquity, allowed for Canonical Scripture, and aſcribed to St. *John* the Apoſtle; and the two laſt were never diſputed, whether they were Divine Writings

*Three Epiſtles, and the Revelations.*

or

or no; but whether they were wrote by St. *John* the Apoſtle. Whether the *Apocalypſe* was wrote by this Apoſtle, or by another St. *John*, has been a Queſtion among ſome, but the general Conſent of Chriſtians has carried it for the Apoſtle. *Vid. Juſt. Martyr, Dial. cum Tryph. Tertul. adv. Marc. Lib.* 3. *Clem. Alex. apud Euſeb. Lib.* 3. *Orig. in Mat.*

*Epiſtles of St.* Paul. No Book was ever received with more general Conſent by the *Church* than the Epiſtles of St. *Paul*, they were read in the Churches very early in the Apoſtolick Times, as appears by that of St. *Peter*, in his Second Epiſtle, where he mentions St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles, and ſays, *In which are ſome things hard to be underſtood, which they that are unlearned and unſtable wreſt, as they do alſo the other Scriptures, unto their deſtruction. Clemens Romanus* takes many Expreſſions out of theſe; the Epiſtles to the *Galatians* and *Philippians* are quoted by *Polycarp*, the Scholar of St. *John*; aud ſome places out of thoſe, and others, are Cited by *Athenagoras*, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, and *Tertullian*. Only ſome have doubted whether or no St. *Paul* wrote the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, but the beſt Judges of Antiquity, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *Origen*, *Euſebius* and *Jerom*, attribute it to St. *Paul*. However, this

this Epiſtle was taken ſo Anciently for Scripture, that *Clement* of *Rome*, who was Contemporary with St. *Paul*, cites ſome Paſſages, *Verbatim*, out of it. And St. *Jerom* writes, That this Epiſtle was always attributed to St. *Paul*, in the *Eaſtern Church*, though it was for ſome time excepted againſt in the *Latine*.

*Epiſtle of St.* James.

The Epiſtle of St. *James* is quoted by as Ancient Authors as *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *Origen*, *Cyprian*, and *Tertullian*; and though, as *Euſebius* relates, it was for ſome time doubted by ſome, yet it is plain, that upon better weighing the Matter, at laſt all received it.

*Epiſtles of St.* Peter.

The Firſt of St. *Peter* was always univerſally received as of undubitable Authority. The Second (as *Origen*, *Euſebius*, and St. *Jerom* write) was ſome time doubted whether it was St. *Peter*'s, but the ſame Writers who relate this, adjudge it to him, and it is mentioned in the Catalogue of Canonical Books of *Clement* of *Alexandria*, of St. *Athanaſius*, and *Nazianzen*.

*Epiſtle of St.* Jude.

The Epiſtle of St. *Jude* is quoted as Canonical Scripture by *Tertullian*, and St. *Cyprian*, and is in all the Catalogues of the Sacred Books, from *Clemens*

*mens Alexandrinus* his time. Indeed it was ſome time doubted, like the Second of St. *Peter*, by ſome Churches, but upon more mature Conſideration, it was univerſally received. It ſeems to be wrote upon the ſame occaſion, as the Second of St. *Peter*, *viz.* to warn the Faithful againſt the Pretences of the *Gnoſticks*, or ſuch other early Hereticks.

*Phil.* Indeed, I am ſufficiently ſatisfied, that theſe Books were very Anciently received in the Church, and that in the times of theſe Early Writers they were look'd upon as Canonical Scripture, and as wrote by thoſe whoſe Names they bear; but how can you prove to me, That the Trick was not plaid ſome time before their time, and that theſe preſent Goſpels only had better luck to be more generally received than the Spurious ones?

*Cred.* It is to me an undeniable Argument, that theſe Goſpels are True and Genuine, becauſe the Ancients rejected the Spurious ones. If they had uſed no manner of Caution in receiving Canonical Scripture, there might be ſome queſtion whether theſe were ſo or no; but when they were ſo Critical in their Examination, to diſtinguiſh

diſtinguiſh the True from the Falſe, to be ſure they had as good Reaſons to embrace the True Ones, as to reject the Falſe. For it is plain they would not be Impoſed upon by any Sham Hiſtories, ſince their Judgment and Diligence were ſo great, that they threw aſide any Impoſtures as ſoon as they were offered. As to the exact particular Times, and other Circumſtances, when and how theſe Writings came from the Apoſtolick Hands to the Church, the want of particular Hiſtory for thoſe times will not ſuffer us to know; but there did not want indubitable Authority to the following Ages to be aſcertained, they were wrote by thoſe very Apoſtles to whom they were aſcribed. For the general Tradition only is a ſufficient Argument to any reaſonable Man, that they were ſo. For what Reaſon have I to queſtion whether ſuch an Author wrote ſuch a Book, which all the World, where his Book was read, ſaid he did? Is it not a madneſs for me, to deny that *Cæſar* wrote the Book of Commentaries, or *Livy* that Hiſtory, becauſe 'tis poſſible, ſome body might Forge it in their Names; or becauſe I cannot bring any poſitive Proof who firſt received the Original Papers from their Hands? Theſe Books have the ſame Proofs of their Genuineſs, as all the other

Books in the World have; that is, they have been univerſally owned to be wrote by theſe Apoſtles; and what can any one deſire more? for your ſuppoſed Poſſibilities which lye againſt all the Books in the World beſides. But yet further, there is more to be ſaid in favour of theſe Books, than of any other. When the World received a Book from the Hands of *Cæſar* or *Livy*, they contented themſelves with the Tranſcripts of it, they did not make a Repoſitory for the Original Manuſcript, for Poſterity to ſatisfie themſelves of its Authority, or to Compare their Copies by. But this was the caſe of moſt of the Apoſtolick Writings, as all Antiquity does juſtifie. The Original Papers were recited in ſome Churches in *Tertullian*'s time, as appears by that remarkable Paſſage in his Book, *Of Preſcriptions againſt the Hereticks. Age jam, &c. You that have a mind to exerciſe your Curioſity, in the matter of your Salvation, run through the Apoſtolick Churches, where the Sees of the Apoſtles do ſtill remain, and there you ſhall find, that their very Authentick Letters are recited.* At *Epheſus* the Original Goſpel of St. *John*, wrote by that Apoſtle's own hand, remained even to the Time of the Emperor *Honorius*. Nay, ſo over ſcrupulous were many Chriſtians even in

in *Ignatius* his time, that they would hardly admit any thing for Scripture, but what they had ſeen in theſe *Archives*, or *Repoſitories*; which Niceneſs that Holy Martyr blames them for; Ἤκουσα τινῶν λεγόντων ἐὰν ἐν τοῖς ἀρχαίοις εὕρω, ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ πιστεύω, ᾧ λέγοντός μοι αὐτοῖς ὅτι γέγραπται, ἀπεκρίθησάν μοι ὅτι πρόκειται, &c. *I have heard ſome ſay, That I do not believe a Goſpel, unleſs I find it in the Archives, and when I anſwer it is written, they ſay it lies before them. But my Archives are Jeſus Chriſt,* Ἄσπιλα not Ἄθικτα, *thoſe Incorruptible Archives, his Croſs and Reſurrection, and Faith by Him, in which I would be Juſtified in your Prayer.* Now when ſuch extraordinary Caution was uſed in receiving theſe Writings, and ſuch wonderful care taken in preſerving the Originals more than ever was known in other Books; it ſhould ſeem that the Providence of God did particularly concern it ſelf to give thereby the fulleſt Aſſurance to the Faith of Chriſtians, and to ſilence the Cavils of Unbelievers.

*Phil.* But ſtill there is ſome ground for Doubts; for though many Chriſtians received theſe Books, yet others rejected many of them; and this ſpoils your Argument of univerſal Reception.

*Cred.* They were univerſally received by the Catholick Church, and thoſe who rejected them were only ſome Hereticks, who therefore diſowned them, becauſe they contradicted ſome mad Opinions of theirs. Hence St. *Matthew* was rejected by the *Manichees*, becauſe he brought ſo many Paſſages out of the *Old Teſtament* to prove the Meſſias, which did perfectly contradict their Hereſie, who did deny the God of the *Jews* to be the God of the *Chriſtians:* The *Alogi* would not allow of St. *John*, who makes Chriſt the *Logos*; and for ſuch Reaſons *Cerinthus*, *Carpocrates*, and *Marcion*, excepted againſt St. *Luke*'s Goſpel, and others againſt St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles. So that upon the whole, there is very little weight in the Prejudiced Exceptions of theſe crazed Hereticks, againſt the whole Chriſtian World, when no one would lay any ſtreſs even on their Unbiaſs'd Judgments in any thing elſe.

*Phil.* Although we ſhould grant that theſe Books were wrote by the Apoſtolick Authors they are aſcribed to, yet ſtill, the moſt material part of the Queſtion lies behind, that is, Whether theſe Writings be Inſpired by God Almighty, or no? But it

it is does not at all appear, that the Apoſtles wrote as Inſpired Prophets, but only as ordinary Doctors; and if ſo, then I ſee no Reaſon that St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles ſhould be more Inſpired Scripture than *Balzacs* Letters. And indeed, I am the more confirmed in this Thought, when I obſerve that the Stile of the Apoſtles is quite different from that of the Prophets; for they uſher in their Diſcourſes with a *Thus ſaith the Lord*; but theſe ſpeak only according to their own Humane Opinion. Nay, St. *Paul* talks frequently as a Man wavering in Opinion, and perplexed in Doubt, and puts it to the choice of his Reader, whether he ſhould be aſſented to, or no, which is far from the Character of an Infallible Inſpired Author, *Therefore we conclude* (ſays he) *that a man is juſtified by faith*, &c. Rom. 3. 28. *For I reckon that the ſufferings*, &c. Rom. 8. 18. *I ſpeak this by permiſſion, and not of commandment*, 1 Cor. 7. 6. *I give my judgment as one that has obtained mercy*, ver. ult. All which Expreſſions are nothing like the Speech of one directed by the Infallible Spirit of God. And though, in the laſt cited Chapter, the Apoſtle ſpeaks of ſome things commanded by the Lord, yet that is

*Tract. Theologo-Pol.* p. 198.

*Idem*, P. 199.

not to be understood of any new Revelation, but only of the Doctrines of Christ, which he taught his Disciples in the *Mount.* Neither would the Apostles have wrote so barbarous *Greek* had they been Inspired by God, it being unreasonable to ascribe all those Solecisms to the Holy Ghost. Besides, the Apostles use Arguments to persuade, like other ordinary Men, which is nothing like the old Prophets, whose Province it was to Foretell, and to Command in God's Name, and not to Dispute. Nay, they submit their Arguments some times to the Reader's Judgment. *I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say,* 1 Cor. 10. 15. Nay, St. *Paul* is so far from speaking after the peremptory way of the Prophets, that instead of Commanding in God's Name, he is forced to use Intreaties. *For love's sake I rather beseech thee,* Phil. 8. And there is yet a further Proof, that the Apostles wrote and taught only as ordinary Doctors; because St. *Paul* is unwilling *to build upon anothers foundation,* Rom. 15. 20. From whence we plainly see, that each Apostle had a distinct Method of Teaching from the rest, like the Teachers of Tongues and Mathematical Sciences, who had

*Vid. Five Letters.*

*Tract. Theol.* p. 196. p. 206.

*Id.* P. 206, 207.

had rather begin with their Scholars perfectly untaught, than to have them come to them initiated in another Maſter's Method. Which different Method of the Apoſtles was the occaſion of ſeveral ſtrange and contradictory Opinions, which vexed the Church for many Years after the Apoſtolick Times. Neither would they have differed from one another in the Points of *Juſtification*, and the Obſervation of Jewiſh Rites, if they had the Prophetick Spirit of God to direct them. Or if they had been Infallibly Inſpired, they would have been more exact in their Numbers, and not have ſaid about a certain time, or about ſuch a Number, which plainly ſhews that they could not exactly tell, and which an Inſpired Man muſt needs have done. And, laſtly, whereas St. *Paul* mentions the *Spirit of God being in him*, 1 Cor. 7. 40. he only means his own Mind, which was of an Honeſt, Sincere, or Spiritual Intention; it being his Opinion, That a Widow ſhould not Marry a Second Husband, declaring, That *ſhe is happier if ſhe abide after my judgment; and I think alſo that I have the Spirit of God.* That is, I deſign to live a ſingle Life, and my Reaſon, which God gave me, tells me, I am the happier for it, and my Reſolution

*M. N. Sent.* P. 256.

is Honeſt and Religious; therefore it is my Judgment it will be happier for her too.

*Cred. Spinoſa* has hope you here, *Philologus*, to a fine deal of pretty Prevarication, and has ſhewn the World that he has Studied Scripture purpoſely to pervert the meaning of it. But to ſet you right in this matter, I will run through the Particulars of this Objection, which it will be an eaſie Matter to Refute.

*Old Teſtament not more Inſpired than the New.*

1. And firſt you are miſtaken when you ſuppoſe there is a material Difference between the Writings of the *Old Teſtament* and the *New*, as to Point of Inſpiration, becauſe the Apoſtles do not begin with, *Thus ſaith the Lord.* But why ſhould the Apoſtles be tied exactly to this Phraſe? Indeed this, and other Expreſſions like it, were a Form of Speech in uſe among the Prophets in ancient Times? but there not having been any Prophets for ſeveral Ages before the coming of Chriſt, this Form of Expreſſion was grown out of date, and therefore the Apoſtles might very well be allowed to uſher in their New Inſpired Writings, with ſuch other ſort of Forms, as to the Holy Ghoſt, and them, ſhould ſeem moſt fit. There was no abſolute neceſſity

ceſſity that they ſhould tell their Readers expreſly, that what they ſaid was the Word of God, when all that were acquainted with their Character knew, they were Inſpired Men; and the conſtant Miracles they did, ſhewed they had the Aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, a thouſand times better than their ſaying ſo. But though they do not begin with, *Thus ſaith the Lord*, or *The Word of the Lord*, yet they ſay that which is tantamount to it. They begin with ſuch an one, *An Apoſtle of Jeſus Chriſt*, which carried with it all the Character of the greateſt Prophet, as all, whom they wrote too, well underſtood. For an Apoſtle was one of thoſe Immediate Meſſengers of *Jeſus Chriſt*, ſent by Him to Preach the Goſpel to the World, being endowed with the Power of Miracles, and the Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, who was to lead them into all Truth, and to Inſpire into their Minds, upon all occaſions, what was fitting for them to ſay, *Mat.* 10. 19. Every Chriſtian of that Age knew that the Words of an Apoſtle, when he taught Religion, were the Words of God, and that he ſpoke only as the Spirit gave him utterance; and therefore to urge any thing more to Aſſert their Inſpiration, was ſuperfluous.

2. Nei-

*Apoſtles not doubting in their Doctrine.*

2. Neither do the Apoſtles at any time talk like Doubting Men, Fluctuating in their Opinion, as if they were not ſure of what they ſaid; and the Arguments which you have brought to prove the ſame, are very far from doing it. When St. *Paul* ſays, *That he reckons that the ſufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that ſhall be revealed in us*; his ſaying *he reckons* is no mark of his Doubt, but is only a *Meioſis*, or diminiſhing Form of Speech, which in reality ſignifies as much as if he ſhould ſay, He was ſure of. For what Man ever doubted whether ſuch Immortal Joys, as the Chriſtians expect in Heaven, will not over and above compenſate for the ſlight temporary Afflictions of this World? Should the Apoſtle have made a doubt of this, as *Spinoſa* pretends; the whole Goſpel, and all his Preaching had been a Jeſt. But this is ſuch a uſual way of Speaking among all Writers, to uſe an Expreſſion which means more than it generally ſignifies, eſpecially when the Matter, as in this place, is out of all doubt; that, methinks, *Spinoſa* ſhould be aſhamed to uſe ſuch a ſilly Criticiſm, to ſupport his Infidelity. And ſo when St. *Paul* ſays, he ſpeaks κατὰ συγγνώμην *by permiſſion*, as we Tranſlate, but rather as

Dr.

Dr. *Hammond* Explains it, *according to Counſel*, is there any ſign of the Apoſtle's not being Inſpired. But ſuppoſing that by Permiſſion he meant, that he ſpake this of his own head; this does not prove that the other parts of the *New Teſtament* are not Inſpired, becauſe this Caſe about Marriage, or abſtaining from the Conjugal Bed, is a particular caſe, in which the Apoſtle might interpoſe his own Humane Judgment; and to diſtinguiſh which from the Divine Direction, he tells the *Corinthians* it was his private Opinion; ſo that at the ſame time he owns this Advice to be his private Sentiments, he does implicitely declare all the reſt to be the Command of God. But it is moſt probable that συγγνώμη does not here ſignifie *Permiſſion*, but *Counſel*, and is oppoſed to Ἐπιταγή, Command; and is as much as if he ſhould ſay, I do not Preach this as a *Command* of God, which it is a ſin to neglect, but only as a *Counſel*, which it is better at this Exigence to comply with. And when he ſays, *He gives his judgment as one that has obtained mercy*, he does not mean that his was the private Judgment of an ordinary Perſon, as *Spinoſa* pretends; but his meaning is, That he gives his Judgment as an Apoſtle, which Apoſtolick Miniſtery it was the great *Mercy* or

*Favour*

*Favour* of God to bestow upon him. But that which your Author next Argues is ridiculous, because no body denies it, *viz. That unto the married I command, yet not I but the Lord*, that this is not to be understood of a new Revelation, but of Christ's Doctrine in the Mount. Why, who ever said it was? It refers to Christ's Injunctions about Divorce, as all Divines allow; and all that St. *Paul* alledges it for, is this, to confirm his own Doctrine by the Doctrine of our Saviour.

*Want of Exactness in the* Greek, *no Argument against the Apostles Inspiration.*

3. But you have a notable Argument against the Inspiration of the *New Testament*, because the *Greek* is not so Exact as you would have it. But, I pray, why must the Holy Ghost be obliged to make the Apostles speak *Greek*, just as they did at *Athens*? For perhaps in all *Greece*, the *Greek* Tongue was spoke exactly no where else. The Holy Spirit of God did not think fit to condescend to such a Nicety as this, to have regard in a Divine Revelation, to the spruce Phrases of a few fine-spoken Citizens. It was the design of the Holy Ghost to make them Infallible Divines, and not *Grammarians*; and if so be their Doctrine was true, he could not think himself obliged to take

care

care of the Fineneſs of their *Greek*. But if the *Greek* of the *New Teſtament* had been as Smooth and Pure, as that of *Xenophon*, or *Iſocrates*, you Unbelievers would have Cavill'd at it more for the Operoſeneſs of its Stile, or its being too like Humane Eloquence, or ſome-what elſe; which would have been a more material Objection, than its not being wrote in exact *Greek*. Therefore the Wiſdom of the Holy Ghoſt is eminently diſplayed in making the Apoſtles ſpeak ſuch *Greek*, as their Countrimen ſpoke all over *Aſia* and *Greece*, which ſerved the purpoſe of Preaching the Goſpel better among them, and all other ordinray People, than if they had ſpoke with all the Refinedneſs of the Town of *Athens*. Nay, I ſhould think that to all reaſonable Men it ſhould ſeem much more proper, that the Apoſtles ſhould rather write like *Helleniſtical Jews*, than *Greeks* bred at the Univerſity of *Athens*.

*Nor their Reaſoning.*

4. O! But their Reaſoning is a great Objection againſt their Inſpiration. I find that the Holy Writings muſt be attacked by you all manner of ways; ſometimes you are diſpleaſed with them for poſitively Commanding, and now for Reaſoning. How can God Almighty pleaſe Men of your Perſuaſion?

But

But why may not Inſpired Men make uſe of Reaſon and Arguments? Their Inſpiration does not take away their Rational Faculty; and, I hope, an Argument is never the worſe for being Inſpired. Indeed, the Precepts of an Inſpired Teacher are to be obeyed, whether he gives a Reaſon for them or no; but when God is pleaſed likewiſe to Inſpire him with proper Arguments, to prove the Reaſonableneſs of thoſe Precepts, this is a double Obligation to comply with them, when we are ſatisfied that they ought not only in Duty, but in Reaſon to be obeyed. Nay, we ought to be ſo far from queſtioning the Truth of the Divine Revelation for this, that we ought rather to admire the wonderful Goodneſs of the Great Author of it, that He is pleaſed ſo far to condeſcend to our Capacities, as to make them Judges of the fitneſs of his Injunctions. But you ſay, The Inſpired Prophets did not Reaſon, and therefore, ſince the Apoſtles Reaſon, it is to be preſumed, that they do not ſpeak by Inſpiration as the former did. This indeed, is one of *Spinoſa*'s Aſſertions, than which, nothing can be more Falſe or Confident to Aſſert. For in the very firſt Chapter of the firſt Book of Prophecies in the Bible, God by his Prophet *Iſaiah*, tells the *Jews*, That He will

will condeſcend to Reaſon with them; *Come, let us reaſon together, ſays the Lord, Iſa.* 1. 18. And, indeed, there is a Vein of Reaſoning conſpicuous in God's Injunctions, or Declarations of his Will, throughout all the Books of the Bible. For even when he only propoſes Rewards or Threats, this is in ſome meaſure an Appeal to Reaſon; for no one can think it reaſonable to incur a Puniſhment when he might obtain a Reward. Does not God reaſon with *Cain*, when he asks him, *Why he was wroth, and his countenance fallen? If thou doeſt well, ſhalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doeſt not well, ſin lieth at the door*, Gen. 4. 7. Is not that Reaſoning, when God ſays, *Abrams Name ſhall be called Abraham, for a father of many nations I have made thee?* Is it not a Reaſou which God gives in the Second Commandment, why Men ſhould not worſhip Images, *God is a jealous God?* Is it not a Reaſon why the Seventh Day is to be kept Holy, becauſe, *In ſix days the Lord created the heaven and the earth*, &c. Were not the Iſraelites to be kind to Strangers, for this Reaſon, *becauſe they were ſtrangers in the land of Egypt*, Exo. 22, 21. And does not God give the Reaſon why his Favours were ſo remarkably ſhewn to the *Jews*, *Not becauſe ye were*

*more*

*more in number than other people (for ye were the fewest of all people) but because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, &c.* Deut. 7. 7. And is not all that Reasoning in the first Chapter of *Isaiah*. *Hear O heavens, and give ear O earth, I have nourished and brought up children, but they have rebelled against me. The Ox knoweth his owner, and the Ass his Master's Cribb, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider*, Isa. 1. 2. & 3. It were endless to give any more Instances, since every Page almost of the *Old Testament*, is full of them. And now, would any one think, that ever such a Pretender to Thinking, as your Friend *Spinosa*, should be guilty of such a stupid piece of Confidence as this Assertion betrays?

*Nor that St.* Paul *uses Intreaties.*

5. But your Author is much concerned that St. *Paul*, if he was Divinely Inspired, should condescend to use Intreaties to *Philemon*. But why might not an Inspired Apostle, or Prophet, use Intreaties? St. *Paul*'s Inspiration did not make him proud; and he was as willing to do all good Offices to the meanest Christian, notwithstanding the greatness of his Revelations, as if he had been but an ordinary Believer. This is no Argument

Argument at all againſt the Inſpiration of this Apoſtle; but on the other Hand, it is a demonſtrative Proof of the Divinity of that Bleſſed Religion which could inſpire a Perſon of the Apoſtolick Dignity with that Humility, as to write ſo preſſing a Letter, as this, in behalf of a poor Converted Slave: But you and your Author ſhould have conſidered, before you made this an Objection againſt the Apoſtles; whither none of the Prophets had uſed Intreaties. As for this Intreaty of St. *Paul* to *Philemon*, it is only upon Account of a ſecular Matter, that he would be reconciled to his Servant *Oneſimus*: But the Prophet *Jeremy* beſeeches *Zedekiah* to comply with a Divine Revelation. *Obey, I beſeech thee, the Voice of the Lord*, Jer. 38. 20.

*Preaching of the Apoſtles not after humane Art.*

6. As for your Notion, that the Apoſtles Preached the Goſpel, after the Methods of Humane Art, becauſe St. *Paul* ſays he was unwilling to Build upon anothers Foundation; that is only a ſportive Conjecture of your Fancy without any Foundation of Reaſon for it. For the Apoſtle, in that Place, gives the Reaſon for his ſo doing, *viz.* That it would be more advantageous for the ſpreading of the Goſpel, to Preach it in Places that had not yet heard

of it; as is plain by the very following Words, *As it is Written, to whom he was not ſpoken of they ſhall ſee: And they that have not heard ſhall underſtand*, Rom. 15. 21.

*Different Method of the Apoſtles, not the Cauſe of Hereſies.*

7. Neither was your ſuppoſed different Method of the Apoſtles Teaching, the Cauſe of the Hereſies of the firſt Ages. For the Apoſtles Glory in their Preaching, of but *one Lord, one Faith, one Baptiſm*, Eph. 4. 5. And take it for a fundamental Maxim, that *Chriſt is not divided*, 1 Cor. 1. 13. And they *earneſtly contended for the Faith which was once delivered to the Saints*, Jude 3. There was never any Scheme of Morality, and Religious Worſhip ſo uniformly Taught by ſo many Men as the Goſpel was; for the Doctrines of all the Chriſtian Nations throughout the whole World never differed in any material Point for many Ages. As for the unorthodox Opinions of the Hereticks of thoſe Times, they were owing to *Simon Magus*, and ſuch like wicked Inſtruments, which the Devil raiſed up to diſturb the Progreſs of the Goſpel, which he plainly foreſaw was like to Ruine his Kingdom. Theſe mad Opinions of the *Æones* and multitudinous Productions of the Divine Na-

Nature were never heard of in the Preaching of the Apoſtles; but look rather to be taken out of *Heſiods Theogonia*, than out of the Apoſtles Sermons or Writings. Compare but the plain and uſeful Doctrines, contained in the Apoſtolick Epiſtles with that idle fanciful Stuff, which *Irænæus* in his firſt Book againſt the Hereticks has Collected out of their Books; and you will never imagine that thoſe wild Opinions did proceed from ſuch ſober Men as theſe.

*Seeming Contradictions, no Objection againſt their Inſpiration.*

8. Neither is the ſeeming Contradiction between St. *Paul* and St. *James*, concerning Juſtification by Faith, an Argument, That the Apoſtles wrote only as Private Doctors, and not as inſpired Men. For this is only a Verbal Contradiction, and the meaning of thoſe two Apoſtles are not different. For by *Works* St. *Paul* means one thing, and St. *James* another. By *Works*, St. *Paul* means the Works of the Ceremonial Law, and St. *James* means Moral Actions.

The Caſe was this: St. *Paul* diſputing againſt the *Jews*, proved that a Man could not be Juſtified or Saved by keeping the Ceremonial Law, which, as it was impoſſible to be fully obſerved; ſo neither had it any tendency to make a Man better, or to

pardon his Sins: And therefore concludes, That Men could be ſaved or juſtified only by the Goſpel, or by Faith in *JESUS CHRIST.* Hence ſome *Libertines* afterwards took advantage from this Doctrine; That ſince men were juſtified by Faith and not Works, therefore they concluded it was no matter to take care about Good Works, and if they had but Faith in Chriſt, they might be ſaved without them, This wicked Doctrine St. *James* undertakes to Confute, and proves, That a *Man is juſtified by Works, and not by Faith only, James* 2. 24. He does not contradict St. *Paul*, and ſay, that the Ceremonial Law is requiſite to Salvation, or that Men are not juſtified by Faith in Jeſus Chriſt; but he contradicts that falſe Explication theſe *Libertines* had put upon his Words, and ſhews, That Good Works, or Moral Actions are requiſite together with Faith, to juſtifie every Man.

*Nor want of exactneſs in Time or Number.*

9. But you ſay, the Apoſtle's Writings cannot be inſpired, becauſe they do not exactly expreſs the time when ſuch a thing happened. But why ſhould an Inſpired Author be obliged to relate all the little Punctilio's of an Action, more than an ordinary Hiſtorian? Does *Livy* or *Thucydides*

*dides* uſe to ſay, ſuch a Battel was fought juſt ſo many *ſtadia* from ſuch a Place, or began upon juſt ſuch a Minute of the Day? Nay, would they not be looked upon impertinent if they did ſo? Then why might not St. *Luke* as well ſay, That *Jeſus began to be about Thirty Years old*; as to be obliged to ſay, how many Months and Days he was more? *Luke* 3. 23. Why might not the ſame Author ſay, the number of the Believers *was about five thouſand*, as properly as to tell the exact Number? To have been ſo preciſely exact in every relation, would have been unworthy of the Wiſdom of the Divine Spirit, and would have ſerved to no other End, but to gratifie Mens idle Curioſities. It is true, that the Holy Ghoſt who dictated this knew the exact Time and Number, but it is not neceſſary, that he ſhould Reveal all that he knew to the Apoſtles, eſpecially the Knowledge of thoſe Things which did in no manner tend to the Buſineſs they were concerned in.

10. As to what you ſay in the laſt Place, concerning St, *Pauls thinking he has the Spirit of God*, that this Spirit of God is only an honeſt Intention of Living in Celebacy; I think is this a miſtaken Interpretation.

*Nor St. Pauls thinking, &c.*

on. I know *Grotius* Interprets it much after this rate, *Non intelligit Revelationem, ſed ſincerum affectum Deo & piis ſerviendi.* But to him I will oppoſe the Interpretation of one, whoſe Sect are not wont to be over-great Friends to Inſpiration; 'tis of *Slichtingius* the *Socinian*. *Authoritatem Paulus hic Sententiæ ſuæ conciliat, ſed eadem modeſtia*, &c. *Paul here gives Authority to his Opinion, but with his wonted Modeſty. He does not ſay abſolutely he has the Spirit of God, but that he thinks he has; whilſt he indubitably proves it, and ſhews that he does not arrogate only to himſelf the Spirit, but allows that others do likewiſe Partake of it with him; and does as much as ſay, if others have the Spirit of God, why ſhould not much more I an Apoſtle of Chriſt think I have it? And therefore my Opinion is not to be deſpiſed, or to be eſteemed like that of any other ordinary Man, but as the Judgment of Him who has the Spirit of God, by whom God inſpires into Men Wiſdom and right ſenſes of Things, neither is any other who has the Spirit of God to be oppoſed to me. Slichtingius* in 1 *Cor.* 7. *v.ult.* Neither is here any ground to think, that St. *Paul* has any regard to his own Celebacy, for he gives only his Judgment, and ſpeaks nothing of his Example; ſo that the Spirit of God here is an in-

inſpiring Spirit, which influences his Judgment, and not an aſſiſting Spirit which directs his Actions.

*Phil.* But if it be ſo plain as you would have it that theſe Books are inſpired, why are not your Divines agreed about the Point? For ſome of them will have every Word and Syllable inſpired in Scripture, and ſome will allow only the Senſe to be inſpired, and others neither Words nor Senſe; but that the Holy Ghoſt left them to themſelves to fall ſometimes into little Miſtakes, keeping only ſuch a vigilancy over them, as not to ſuffer them to miſtake in Material Points. Now till your ſpiritual Guides are agreed in this Matter, I muſt be of Opinion they are not inſpired at all.

*Different Explications no Argument againſt Inſpiration.*

*Cred.* It is no Argument againſt the Truth of the Inſpiration of the Apoſtolick Writings, that ſome Divines differ about the Manner of it. For there are many natural Truths which all Men are agreed in the Reality of, and yet Philoſophers differ extreamly, in aſſigning the Phyſical Cauſes of them. And there are ſeveral Matters of Fact, which are univerſally allow'd as to the Subſtance of them, and yet there are ſome ſlight diſagree-

ments, as to ſome Particular Circumſtances belonging to them. Theſe Things are and will be as long as the Infirmities of humane Nature continue, which abounds with Paſſions and Prejudices, and Variety of Opinions, and oftentimes a Love of Novelty, and a deſire of ſaying ſomething new upon common Subjects, though frequently with leſs certainty than what is commonly aſſerted. But however this does not deſtroy thoſe general Truths in which they all agree, but rather is a greater ſupport of them; for as the Diſagreement ſhews the Uncertainty of ſuch Opinions, ſo the Univerſal Conſent ſhews that the Subſtance of the Thing they differ about is true. Now unleſs you could ſhew, that Chriſtians were at difference, whither the Scriptures were at all inſpired or no, it is no Argument againſt this Doctrine, that there are different Opinions about the Manner or Extent of it. Now to ſet you right, as far as I am able, in this Matter, I will ſhew you

1. That the Holy Scriptures are inſpired by the Holy Ghoſt.

2. How far ſuch Inſpiration extends.

1. That the Holy Scriptures are inſpired by the Holy Ghoſt.

Now the Method I ſhall make uſe of, to ſhew that the Scriptures are inſpired, ſhall be

be to prove it from the Three General Heads Divines are wont to argue from in Points of this Nature, *viz.* 1. From Reaſon. 2. From Scripture. And 3. Ancient Authority.

*Inſpiration of Scripture proved from Reaſon.*

1. I look upon it as evident from Reaſon, that the Books of Holy Scripture, and particularly of the New Teſtament are inſpired, for the ſake of theſe Arguments which I take to be very Concluſive.

*As much need of Inſpiration in Writing as in Preaching.*

1. If the Preaching of the Apoſtles were inſpired, as *Spinoſa* himſelf grants (if any thing can be argued from the Conceſſions of ſo looſe a Writer) and no Chriſtian ever denied; there is certainly the ſame or greater Reaſons that their Writings are ſo too. For if the Holy Ghoſt inſpired them to ſpeak to a ſmall number of their Auditors in their Sermons, he cannot be ſuppoſed to be wanting to them in this Aſſiſtance, when they wrote their Books which were to be read by the whole World. For all the poſſible Reaſons that can be aſſigned, Why the Holy Ghoſt did inſpire them in their Preaching will hold as to their Writings. Was the Inſpiration afforded them to ſuggeſt to them new Divine Truths and Doctrines? This was as requi-

requiſite for the Particular Churches, and for Future Ages, for the uſe of whom theſe Books were wrote. Were they inſpired in their Sermons to keep them from Error? Then it was altogether as needful, that the ſame Direction ſhould be afforded to their Writings, which might be as liable to miſtakes. Nay, Inſpiration to hinder their Miſtakes in their Writings was vaſtly more requiſite, than to have them in their Preaching. If St. *Paul* or St. *Peter* had been guilty of erroneous Doctrine in the Preaching one of their Sermons, it might poſſibly have paſſed over unregarded, or the Error though imbibed at firſt by thoſe Auditors, might in Time have vaniſhed when they were Dead. But ſhould they have been ſuffered, for want of Inſpiration, to have wrote down Errors in their Books, they would then have traduced them to all Poſterity, and put them out of a poſſibility of being ever laid aſleep. *Vox audita perit Litera Scripta Manet.*

*The Apoſtolick Honour a Proof of their Inſpiration.*

2. Unleſs the Writings of the Apoſtles were inſpired, there is no account to be given why ſo great Deference and Authority has been given to them by Chriſtians of all Ages. For otherwiſe, why ſhould Chriſtians always appeal to theſe as to Oracles to decide all

all manner of Differences in Religion? Why ſhould they in all Lines look upon every Sentence thereof to be a Divine Axiom beyond which there could be Appeal and no Diſpute? The Old Hereticks, that denied the moſt conſiderable Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, yet never queſtioned the Divinity of Scripture, and though they denied the Authority of ſome Parts, yet they owned the Inſpiration of the reſt; they argue from Scripture juſt as the Orthodox do; and triumph over them when they think they have it on their ſide. Now, unleſs theſe Books were inſpired, how is it poſſible that Men of ſuch different Intereſts ſhould have that Opinion of them, and that Veneration for them? You cannot ſay, that it is the Antiquity of theſe Writings which have given them that Authority, becauſe they have the ſame Deference paid them by thoſe that lived in the ſame Age they were wrote: For *Clement* and *Ignatius* confirm their Doctrines by the Apoſtolick Writings, as well as Modern Divines. If you ſay it is becauſe they were Apoſtles; I anſwer that the greateſt ſhare of that illuſtrious Character aroſe from their Inſpiration, which all Chriſtians did ever believe was not only in their Sermons but in their Books.

3. But

*Because Inspiration the best way to preserve Christianity.*

3. But further, since it has pleased God Almighty to reveal the Christian Religion to the World, it is but reasonable, that he should contrive the best ways for preserving it incorrupt and such as it came from his Hands. But unless the Scriptures be inspired this Design is not answered. For if the Books of the New Testament were wrote only by fallible Men, who had not the Assistance of the Holy Ghost in their Writing, then they may possibly contain some Errors, which may corrupt the Faith, which is not consistent with that Care of the True Religion of the Gospel, which God in his own Nature is inclined, and in his Holy Word has declared to have: If the Scriptures are not inspired, how shall any Differences which arise in the Church be decided? Traditions are on both sides perhaps pretended, and the Errors which continually creep into them, make them a very uncertain Guide, and the Infallibility of Popes and Councils which may likewise be pretended, suppose still an inspired Scripture for them to Interpret; so that if these Books be not inspired, there is no certain way to decide a Difference in Christianity, and upon this account if once Controversies arise among Christians, they must necessarily wrangle

wrangle them out unto the Worlds End without any poſſibility of Reconciliation. Which is a Thing, that to be ſure the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God would in ſome meaſure take Care to prevent. Nay, I appeal to you, *Philologus*, upon Suppoſition that you owned that the Chriſtian Religion was a Divine Inſtitution taught by God, whither you do not think that God Almighty would take Care that theſe Writings, which he fore knew all Poſterity would appeal to as the Touch-ſtone of True Chriſtianity, ſhould not be liable to any Error; but that his Holy Spirit would ſo aſſiſt thoſe Compoſitions with an Infallible Veracity, that they ſhould be ſufficient to ſilence all Differences when they ariſe: I ſay, you cannot but acknowledge that when God had founded ſuch an Inſtitution, he would have taken this Care to preſerve it.

*Proof of Inſpiration from Scripture.*

2. Nor are there wanting moſt evident Proofs from the Scripture it ſelf, that thoſe Books are divinely inſpired. One might be aſſured of this, if one conſidered only thoſe Promiſes which our Bleſſed Lord made to his Diſciples. *And when they bring you unto the Synagogues, and unto Magiſtrates and Powers, take ye no Thought how or what Thing ye ſhall Anſwer, for the Holy Ghoſt ſhall teach you*

*you in the same Hour what ye shall say*, Luke 12. 11. Now if the Holy Ghost took such Care what they spoke in such publick Places, he would have as vigilant an Inspection of what they wrote to all the World. Christ Promises them *another Comforter who is to abide with them for ever*, John 4. 16. And therefore that Comforter can not be supposed to Desert them in such an important Concern as Writing the Books of the New Testament. *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your Remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you*, John 14. 26. Now when could the Apostles have such need of an infallible Teacher and Remembrancer, as when they were Writing the Life and Doctrines of Jesus Christ, and giving Rules of Instruction for the good of Christian Souls, to all succeeding Ages? So that, if God did not assist the Apostles in this Work, our Saviour did not make good his Promise; which no Christian must allow. But there are positive Texts of Scripture, which declare the Books of the New Testament to be inspired. St. *Paul* says expressly, 1 *Cor.* 2. 16. *We have the mind of Christ*; that is, he was inspired both in his Writing and Preaching. *The good Thing which was com-*

*committed unto thee* (ſays St. *Paul* to *Timothy*) *by the Holy Ghoſt which dwelleth in us.* From which it is plain, that he ſpoke by the Aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, when he inſtructed *Timothy*, 1 Tim. 1. 14. *Ye ſeek a Proof of Chriſt ſpeaking in me*, ſays the ſame Apoſtle to the *Corinthians*, Cap. 13. 3. And he ſays *thoſe that deſpiſe* the Apoſtles, *deſpiſe not Man but God, who hath alſo given unto us his Holy Spirit.* Now there could be no force in this Argument, if St. *Paul* did not think that this Advice which he then gave to the *Theſſalonians* was dictated by the Spirit of God. So again, 1 *Cor.* 14. 37. *If any Man think himſelf to be a Prophet, or Spiritual, let him acknowledge that the Things which I write unto you, are the Commandments of the Lord.* That is, the Contents of that Epiſtle are as much inſpired by the Holy Spirit of God, as the Revelations of any ſpiritual Man whatſoever. St. *Peter* likewiſe allows St. *Pauls* Epiſtles to be *wrote by the Wiſdom given* by God: *In which*, ſays he, *are ſome things hard to be underſtood, which they that are unlearned and unſtable wreſt, as they do alſo the other Scriptures*, 2 Pet. 3. 15. Where you may obſerve, that the Apoſtle not only allows St. *Paul* to write by a Wiſdom afforded by Inſpiration, but equals his Writings with the *other Scrip-*

*Scriptures*, viz. Thoſe of the Old Teſtament which the *Jews* did moſt undoubtedly own to be inſpired. And ſo much for the Scripture-Proofs, which are ſufficient to ſatisfie every Chriſtian that theſe Books are divinely inſpired; and to ſatisfie any other reaſonable Man, that the Apoſtles at leaſt pretended to ſuch Inſpiration.

*From Ancient Authority.*

3. The next thing I promiſed you was to bring ſome ancient Authorities in favour of the Inſpiration of Scripture, in which I ſhall be very ſhort. *Clement* of *Rome*, who lived in the Apoſtles Time, ſays, that St. *Pauls* Epiſtles were *moſt certainly inſpired*; for ſpeaking of his firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, he uſes theſe Words ἐπ᾽ ἀληθείας πνευματικῶς ἐπίστειλε, *which he moſt aſſuredly ſent by the Aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt*, Clem. Ep. Edit. Colom. p. 110. *Theophilus Antiochenus*, who was Biſhop of *Antioch*, Ann. Chr. 170. calls the Evangeliſts πνευματοφόρους the *Bearers of the Spirit*, and ſays both the Prophets and the Apoſtles did ἐν πνεύματι λελαληκέναι, ſpeak by the ſame Spirit. *Theoph. ad Autol.* Lib. 3. *Irenæus* ſays, *Scripturæ perfectæ ſunt verbo Dei & Spiritu ejus dictæ. The Scriptures are perfect as being ſpoke by the Word and Spirit of God*, Adv. Hæreſ. *Lib.* 2. *Unus & idem Spiritus qui in Prophetis quidem*

*quidem præconavit*, &c. *ipſe & in Apoſtolis annunciavit*, Id. Lib. 3. *The ſame Spirit which Preached in the Prophets did Evangelize in the Apoſtles.* Juſtin Martyr ſays, That the Scriptures which the Chriſtians Build their Faith upon, *are not idle Fables*, but were μεστοὶ πνεύματος θείου; *full of the Divine Spirit*, Dial. cum Tryph. *Ed. Par.* 226. *Clemens Alexandrinus* calls St. *Paul* Θεσπίσιος Ἀπόστολος. The Divine Apoſtle, *Strom.* 1. He ſays, That the Chriſtians by reading the Scriptures are θεοδίδακτοι, that they have, ἱερὰ γράμματα; Sacred Books, and that they are παρὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ Θεοῦ παιδευόμενοι inſtituted by the Son of God, *Strom.* 1. *Edit. Com.* p. 137. And *Strom.* V. p. 24. He aſſerts προφήτας εἶναι τοὺς Ἀποστόλους, &c. *That the Apoſtles were Prophets, one Holy Spirit working in them all.* And he elſewhere calls them πνεύματος μαθητὰς *Diſciples of the Spirit*, Strom. 1. *Tertullian* ſays, That 'tis the *Majeſtas Spiritus Sancti, the Majeſty of the Holy Ghoſt*, which ſpeaks in one of St. *Pauls* Epiſtles, *De Reſur. Carn.* c. 24. And *Origen* ſays, that theſe Holy Books *are not the Commentaries of Men, but are wrote by the Inſpiration of the Holy Spirit*, Phil. *Cap.* 1. To run down lower among Chriſtian Writers, and to cite all their Authorities for the Inſpiration of the Apoſtolick Writings would be

Infinite: But what has been brought hitherto has been ſufficient to ſhew, that the firſt Chriſtians even in the earlieſt Time of the Goſpel did own, that the Books of the New Teſtament were Divinely Inſpired. And when thoſe Men, who lived in or ſo very nigh the Time of the Apoſtles, did univerſally acknowledge that theſe Books were Inſpired, we of our Time can have no manner of Reaſon to doubt of it. If they that had the opportunity of examining the Original of theſe Books, and converſed with thoſe that were acquainted with the Apoſtles and their Character, and muſt needs know whither the Apoſtles gave theſe out for Inſpired Books or no; if theſe early Chriſtians owned them to be ſuch, we, that have no ſuch Advantages of making thoſe Trials, have no Reaſon to deny, but that they have all that Inſpiration, which the Church has in all Ages attributed to them.

*How far the Scriptures were inſpired.*

I muſt now diſcharge my laſt Part of my Promiſe and ſhew, what, in my Opinion is the Extent of this Divine Inſpiration, and how far the Apoſtles were inſpired by the Holy Ghoſt.

Now I do not think that every particular Expreſſion Word and Letter were dictated

ſtated by the Holy Ghoſt; ſo that the Apoſtles were nothing but the bare Amanuenſes to the Holy Ghoſt, and that they had no more ſhare in the Compoſition, than my Man has when I dictate a Letter for him to Write. For this does not ſeem conſiſtent with the Nature of the Divine Operations, which do not uſually put ſuch a force upon Humane Nature, but act generally in ſuch a way as is agreeable to their Rational Faculties. But if the Holy Ghoſt ſhould have dictated to the Apoſtles after that rate, they had been only the pure Organs of the Holy Ghoſt, and perfect Machines all the while for him to Work upon, without any manner of Exerciſe of their own faculties. Therefore 'tis moſt probable, that God Almighty dealt with them more like rational Creatures; which was by letting their Minds have ſome ſhare in this Divine Work. It is more agreeable to Reaſon, that he ſuggeſted thoſe Divine Thoughts firſt to their Minds, and ordinarily left them to weigh them in their Thoughts, as they did other Truths, and to put them into what Expreſſions their Fancies were naturally inclined to uſe; ſtill preſiding over them and keeping them, from expreſſing any thing contrary to the

*The Apoſtles generally made uſe of their own Words and Reaſon.*

Divine Mind, or to the Dignity of the Sacred Subject. And it is further evident, that the Apoſtles, as the Prophets heretofore, had ſome ſhare in the Expreſſion at leaſt; for otherwiſe there is no account to be given of the different Styles of theſe Perſons, which varied according to their Tempers and Education. For if the Holy Ghoſt had been the ſole Author of every Expreſſion, the Style of every Book in Scripture had been probably alike; but however there would not have been that difference found as now there is, and which may be aſcribed to natural Cauſes. If the Holy Ghoſt had dictated every Word, why ſhould *Iſaiah* who was bred in a Court, be more florid and magnificent than *Amos* who had his Education among the Herd? Why ſhould St. *Luke*, who had a Polite Education, write his Books in better *Greek*, and more agreeable to the *Greek* and *Latin* Hiſtories than St. *John*? Why ſhould St. *Paul* who was brought up among the *Rabbins*, diſcover more of Jewiſh Learning and Rabbinical Reaſoning than the other Apoſtles? Why ſhould St. *John* above all the others diſcover in his Writings ſo much ſweetneſs of Nature, ſo much Love and Tenderneſs, if it was not in ſome Meaſure owing to his natural Temper?

Theſe

Theſe are undeniable Arguments, that the Apoſtles had ſome ſhare in their Divine Compoſitions, and that they varied their Expreſſions, and in ſome meaſure model-led their Thoughts, according to theſe Qualifications.

*Chief of the Senſe inſpired.*

But then we muſt own, that the Chiefeſt Part of the Senſe was inſpired by God. He ſuggeſted to their Mind thoſe Divine Truths, which they reveal to the World either when they were Writing, or if they had Learned them before by refreſhing their Memories, and taking Care that they added or omitted nothing that was material. It is an impoſſible, as well as a very needleſs Thing for us to diſcover, how far the Divine Spirit intereſted himſelf in Inſpiring the Apoſtles, and to tell exactly what in their Compoſitions was owing to Reaſon, and what to Inſpiration. It is ſufficient to ſay, that the Holy Ghoſt afforded all the Aſſiſtance which was neceſſary to make thoſe to be Infallible Writings. Therefore we may be ſure, that the Aſſiſtance was more or leſs, according as the Subject which they wrote required. When they wrote Hiſtorically of *Matters of Fact* which they themſelves had ſeen or which had been reported to them by credible Witneſſes, there

was no Reaſon that the Subſtance of this Hiſtory ſhould be revealed to them again; it was then ſufficient only to have their Memories refreſhed, as our Saviour had promiſed them, and that the Holy Ghoſt ſhould ſo far inſpect them, as they might not be guilty of any Error in the Relation. Where any *new Divine Truths* are delivered by them, which were not taught them by Chriſt when he was upon Earth, there it is neceſſary to aſſert that the whole of thoſe were immediately inſpired into their Minds by the Holy Ghoſt; becauſe ſuch Truths could not be the reſult of their Humane Underſtanding or Reaſoning, nor yet the Treaſure of their Memory, and therefore could come into their Minds no other way but by Inſpiration. And as for other things which may be found in their Books, ſuch as *Reaſoning and Arguing* from Revealed Truths; that which is moſt rational to think in this Point is this, that the Holy Ghoſt ſuffered them to make uſe of their reaſoning Faculties, as far as the Arguments were ſuitable and ſolid, though at the ſame Time quickening their Invention, and clearing their Judgment, and hindring them from Writing any thing which might be Illogical or Impertinent.

But

But then I further add, that the Inſpiration of the Holy Ghoſt ſometimes proceeded ſo far as to inſpire the very Words and Ways of Expreſſion. I obſerved to you in our Diſcourſe in the Morning, that it was very probable, that the Word *All* was inſerted in the Goſpel of St. *Matthew*, by the particular Direction of the Holy Ghoſt, in the Relation of the Inſtitution of the Lords Supper, *Drink ye all of this*, Mat. 26. 27. And ſo *Mark* 14. 23. *And they all drank of it.* Now it is not reaſonable to think, that theſe two Evangeliſts inſerted the Word *All* by chance, for it is not a very uſual way of ſpeaking, and we ſee is omitted in the Relation of the Delivery of the Bread, and therefore muſt be intended by the Holy Ghoſt for ſome further End, which is to ſhew that all the Communicants have a right to the Cup, which he foreſaw in Future Ages would be by ſome ſacrilegiouſly denied them. And ſo it is not to be doubted, but that the Holy Ghoſt did particularly direct them in ſome ſeeming accidental Expreſſions, which he ordered them to uſe, that Chriſtians might have thereby evident Proofs from Gods Word of ſeveral Principal Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, ſuch as the Doctrines of the Divinity of Chriſt and

*Sometimes the Words.*

the Holy Spirit; of Juſtification and Satisfaction, *&c.* Many good Arguments for which are drawn from ſome particular Expreſſions in Scripture, which would have been wanting for the ſupport of theſe Chriſtian Truths, if the Holy Ghoſt had given the Sacred Writers leave to have expreſſed thoſe Paſſages otherways.

## *Of the Style of Scripture.*

*Phil.* WE have ſaid enough upon the Authors, and of the Inſpiration of theſe Books, and if you pleaſe we will Diſcourſe a little about the Style of them. If the Compoſing of them was any ways owing to the Holy Ghoſt, methinks they ſhould have been wrote in much a finer Language than we find they are. The Common Reaſon of Mankind expects, that a Divine Compoſition ſhould have in it the height of Eloquence; and therefore, the very *Heathens* uſed to ſay, that the moſt admired Pieces of Eloquence, whither in Verſe or Proſe, were *Divinely wrote*, and the Authors of them *inſpired*; which Expreſſions, though they are Metaphorically

to

to be underſtood, yet they ſhew the Senſe of Mankind, what Eloquence is reaſonably to be expected in Books which ſhould be Divinely wrote. But alas! how mean are the Scriptural Compoſitions to thoſe of the Ancient *Greeks* and *Romans*, and other truly Elegant Writers. Here is nothing to be found of that charming numerouſneſs of Words, the Propriety and Copiouſneſs of Expreſſion, that Nobleneſs of Thought and Argument, and Exactneſs of Method which render thoſe ancient Pieces ſo truly admirable, and much more deſerving the Name of *Divine* than thoſe you afford it to. In a Word, that contemptible meanneſs of the Scripture Style, has been always to me a great Argument againſt its Divinity; for if ſo many admirable Beauties are to be diſcovered in the Style of *Cicero*, which were all owing to Art and Nature, one might reaſonably expect to find the ſame in a Compoſition of the Holy Ghoſt, who to be ſure underſtood the Art of Eloquence altogether as well. Nay, one finds in theſe Books ſo many uncouth and odd Expreſſions, as is enough to turn the Stomach of us nice People, who are uſed to Style and Elegance.

*Cred.*

*Eloquence in Scripture needleſs.*

*Cred.* And now for once ſhould we grant all your Suppoſition True, that the Scripture Style was as contemptible and void of all Eloquence as ſome would make it; What would this argue againſt the Authority, or the Uſefulneſs of theſe Books? What though the Arguments be not dreſſed up ſo neatly as in your Prophane Authors, they may be altogether as ſtrong and Concluſive, and if the Logick be but Good, what Matter for the Rhetorick? As for fine Words they prove nothing at all, they only flaſh a falſe Fire in the Fancy, and raiſe a jingle in the Ears, but they make no Body either wiſer or better.

Nay, in ſuch grave and momentous Matters, as are generally the Subject of the Holy Scriptures, it would be highly improper to make uſe of fine Rhetorical Flouriſhes. It would be a Jeſt for a Phyſitian to Write a Recipe for a Sick Man in a juſt *Ciceronian* Style, and to throw all the Names of his Druggs and their Quantities into Artificial Periods. And who would be ſo ſimple to expect a Conveyance of an Eſtate to begin with one of *Tullies* Exordiums? Now if we do not expect Eloquence in theſe common Concerns of Life, what more Reaſon have we to expect it in

in Matters relating to our Salvation? When we are ready to excuſe the Phyſician and the Lawyer, if they do but their Work ſubſtantially; why ſhould we expect that God Almighty in ſaving our Souls ſhould likewiſe tickle our ears? What a ſtrange Levity is there in this Expectation? This does plainly ſhews, that ſome Men are more concerned for their Bodies and Eſtates, than they are for their immortal Souls; when they are ſo capricious and humorſome in one more than in the other.

Nay, this fine Eloquence which you ſo much admire is generally made uſe of, when Men deſign to dazzle Peoples minds which they cannot convince; being otherways Content with an eaſie and plain Argumentation.

*Fur es ait Pedio, Pedius quid? Crimina raſis*
*Librat in Antithetis* ———

*Pedius is Taxed with Theft, but when* Pedius *can't deny it what does he ſay? Why, he puzzles the Matter with Rhetorick.* But God Almighty in Inditing the Scriptures had no Deſign to put Fallacies upon Mens Reaſonings, and to gain over their Affections by Arts, which would not directly perſuade their Underſtandings; he was to deliver

liver the Terms of Mens Salvation, and the Rules of their Duty, which required no Rhetorick to expreſs, and the more plainly and familiarly they were delivered, it was to the better Purpoſe. Theſe Holy Writings were deſigned for the Benefit and Uſe of all Mankind, the greateſt Part of which are illiterate and perfectly ignorant of the Beauties of Rhetorick; ſo that if theſe Books had had the greateſt Perfection of that Art beſtowed upon them, it had been perfectly loſt to above three Quarters of Mankind, who would have been apt to have deſpiſed them for thoſe ſublimities of Expreſſion, which ſome few Oratorical Ears only might have admired them for.

Nay further thoſe Elegancies, which you would have had the Scriptures abounded with, would have but puzzled common Peoples Underſtandings, and ſerved them only to gape at, inſtead of inſtructing them. Suppoſing that the Scriptures had been wrote after the Plann of *Plato*'s Dialogues, and in every Page had been pregnant with his Towring Thoughts and Rapturous Expreſſions; had they talked of *Monads* and *Diads*, of the Flights, Deſcents, and Moultrings of the Soul, of the Concentrical Union with the Deity, and the like; what a World of Edification com-

mon

mon People would have got by this? Nay what impartial Man will not allow, that thoſe Thoughts of *Plato*, if they have any meaning in them, are not better expreſſed in Scripture, in the Hiſtory of the Creation, and the Fall of *Adam*, and in the Reparation made by our Saviour in the Goſpel? Theſe are plain ſenſible Truths to be underſtood by every one, whilſt the other are dreſſed up in ſuch Philoſophical Cant, that the moſt Laborious Students in that ſort of Philoſophy can hardly tell what to make of.

And the Caſe would be much the ſame, if the Scriptures were wrote according to the ordinary Rules of Prophane Oratory, the common People would be very little affected with thoſe Rhetorical Figures, and thoſe plain Relations and familiar Inſtances, ſo frequent in the Bible, are a thouſand Times better fitted for ſuch Capacities.

To what has been ſaid upon this Head, there are two Things more, which render the Art of Eloquence perfectly uſeleſs in Scripture, and thoſe are theſe.

*Firſt*, The Authority of God Almighty, by the Direction of whoſe Holy Spirit theſe Writings were Indited. For what needs there any Art of Perſuaſion, when he who is Infallible Truth does dictate to us?

us? When we are perſuaded, that it is God who ſpeaks to us, all the Oratory and Logick in the World cannot make us more certain of the Things, nor more firmly to aſſent to them, than his bare Aſſertion. Nay, if he ſhould give no Reaſon for it, his bare ſaying ſo, who cannot deceive us, is of more weight than a Thouſand Arguments.

And *Secondly*, the Motives which God has propounded in Scripture, for the obeying his Commands, are much more Effectual to perſuade Men than the Exacteſt Eloquence; and thoſe are Future Rewards and Puniſhments. *Knowing therefore the Terror of the Lord we perſuade Men*, ſays the Apoſtle; for certainly the Flames of Hell are more apt to deter Men from a ſinful Courſe than the moſt moving Oration: And the Joys of Heaven will ſooner incline a Man to Goodneſs, than the fineſt Charms of Rhetorick. If Mens affections are not to be rouſed up by theſe powerful Motives, the ſtrains of Oratory to be ſure, will make but a very faint Impreſſion upon them.

*Greek and Latin Authors not the ſtandard of Eloquence.*

2. Neither are the Compoſitions of thoſe Prophane *Greek* and *Latin* Authors, which you do ſo much admire, the only Standard of True Eloquence; as if no Com-

Compoſition could be ſaid to be Elegant, but what comes up to their Rules and Method of ſpeaking. For Eloquence, like Words, is a pure placitory Thing, and does depend upon the Opinions and Cuſtoms of Men, ſo that what is Eloquent, in one Age or Nation, may be barbarous in another. For Eloquence is only a way of ſpeaking, which Faſhion has brought into Repute; and as every Nation is Miſtreſs of its own Words to Uſe them, or Diſuſe them at her Pleaſure, ſo ſhe is of the Compoſition of theſe Words, and may mold them into what Contexture ſhe pleaſes; ſo that That Way of Expreſſion which is moſt in Uſe, among Men of the beſt Figure in ſuch a Countrey, that is the National Eloquence. Though one of *Demoſthenes* his Orations be very Elegant *Greek*, yet if any one ſhould make a Literal Tranſlation of it into the Sacred Tongue, it would be Barbarous *Hebrew*; becauſe thoſe *Greek* Idiotiſms and peculiar Ways of Expreſſion, and Argumentation too, were never in Uſe in that Nation. Therefore 'tis a great Miſtake, to account the *Greek* and *Latin* Eloquence to be the only True Standard of Eloquence; for they are only the Standards of the Eloquence of thoſe Nations, or perhaps of ſome other Nations, which have Learned their Rhe-

Rhetorick from them; but they are far from being the Standards of the *Eaſtern* Eloquence, to which they bear very little or no Analogy. Indeed in moſt of our *European* Languages, the Eloquence is pretty conformable to that of the *Greeks* and *Romans*, becauſe of late Years Learned Men have made That their Pattern, and many of theſe Languages were derived from the *Latin* Tongue: But it is unreaſonable to expect this, in Writers many of whom lived long before theſe *Greek* and *Latin* Authors, whom we preſcribe for the Pattern of our Eloquence, were born. It is ſufficient, that *Moſes* or *Iſaiah* wrote, according to the moſt faſhionable and eſteemed Eloquence of their own Times; but it is very unreaſonable to expect, that the Holy Ghoſt ſhould have inſpired them with an Eloquence which was perfectly unknown in the Countries they lived, and which the *Greeks* themſelves had not in any Perfection, till about the Time of *Plato* and *Demoſthenes*. There were about that Age in *Greece* great and wonderful Genius's, and who expreſſed their noble Thoughts with extraordinary Art and Accuracy; from theſe Mens Books the Rhetoricians (as for Inſtance *Ariſtotle*) drew up the Laws of Eloquence, and framed their Rules of Rhetorick

rick from the Beauties they obſerved in the Writings of theſe Men; and to theſe Laws all ſucceeding Writers of that Nation tied themſelves up, for ever after.

As for the *Latins*, they fell into the ſame Road with them, by going to School at *Athens* or by having *Greek* Tutors from thence; ſo that *Cicero*'s Eloquence is very nigh of the ſame Mold with *Demoſthenes*, and what ever new Beauties he was Maſter of, he either drew them out of his own Orations into Rules himſelf, or *Quintilian* or other Rhetors did the ſame. Now our Infidels argue very ſillily, when they ſay how poorly the Scriptures come up to the Rules of Eloquence in reſpect of *Tully* or *Demoſthenes*, when thoſe very Rules of Rhetorick were made out of *Tullies* and *Demoſthenes* his Books. And what wonder is it, that a Thing does beſt Correſpond with it ſelf? For nothing can be ſo like as the ſame. If I was to draw up Rules of Rhetorick out of *Iſaiah* or St. *Paul*, and Men would agree thoſe ſhould be the ſtandard of Eloquence; though a Thouſand Men ſhould imitate thoſe Styles, not one would be able to come perfectly up to them.

So that before you Condemn the Scripture for want of Eloquence; you ſhould not only compare them with the Writings

of *Demoſthenes*, and *Cicero*, and the Rhetorical Rules drawn from their Books which the Sacred Writers never converſed with; but you ſhould compare them with the Ways of ſpeaking in the *Eaſtern* Nations, and the Reputable Eloquence there; and then, if you find that they are defective in a Decent way of expreſſing their Thoughts and Sayings, and what was eſteemed very Elegant in thoſe Countries and Ages, then we ſhall be willing to own the Charge. But when Men expect that theſe Books ſhould be wrote like thoſe of the *Greeks* and *Romans*, or as many do with the fine Air of a *French Eſſayer*, and are for expoſing every Expreſſion that does not hit in with thoſe Nice Rules; What can betray their Ignorance or Folly more? As if *Moſes* could not be an inſpired Writer, unleſs the Holy Ghoſt molded his Words into the Style of *Cicero*, or had wrote like *Mountaign* or *Rablais*, which in thoſe Ages had been unintelligible Barbarity.

*Scriptures avoid the Vices of Eloquence, which* Greek *and* Latin *Authors are ſubject to.*

3. And after all, I cannot allow you, that the *Greek* and *Latin* is the Sole and True Standard of Eloquence; but is ſo far from being Superiour to the Scriptural, that it is in many Points Inferiour. I do not contend that there is as much

much Art in *Moſes* his Hiſtory as in the Style of *Livy*, or that St. *Peter* or St. *Pauls* Sermons are ſo curious Compoſitions, as of *Tullies* Orations. But I ſay, that theſe Sacred Compoſitions are not only more Eloquent for the Times and Places they were deſigned for; but that they are free from ſome Vices in Eloquence, which the *Greek* and *Latin* Writings were ſubject to. As for Inſtance, the *Hebrew* Eloquence is void of that extraordinary Verboſity and crouding in of Words to no Purpoſe, which the generality of *Pagan* Authors are guilty of. If one was to ſtrip *Demoſthenes* or *Iſocrates* his Orations of their ἀνὰς, οἰς, ἰων's & ἰην's, their μεν's, νυ's & ρα's, and the like, of an abundance of their inſignificant Epithets and Circumlocutions, of a number of their long Compound Verbs and Nouns, which carry no more Sence with them than their Simples, and a great many other Parts of a Period, which ſerve to no other Purpoſe, but to make it Rowl roundly; one might ordinarily ſpeaking, reduce three Lines of *Greek* into one of Senſe.

And as for the *Latin* Eloquence, which is uſually more Denſe and Compreſs; yet even in that there is ſuch an affected *Copia Verborum* with a neglect of new Matter, ſo much curiouſneſs in ranging Words, and

bringing in ſenſleſs Particles, that when they are brought to the juſteſt Rules of Criticiſm, it is a great Queſtion, whether all this be not rather idle Pedantry than true Eloquence. And this was the Opinion of *Jamblicus* the Philoſopher. *Barbarous Languages* (ſays he meaning the Oriental) have a *great deal of* συντομία *graceful Brevity, and have leſs of Ambiguity and redundancy of Words.* And indeed, if we conſider impartially thoſe Artful Compoſitions of the beſt Orators, even of *Tully* himſelf, we cannot but own them guilty oftentimes of a jejune Operoſeneſs, which our ſerious Reaſon cannot allow to be true Eloquence, and which frequently to, has nothing extraordinary, but an agreeable chiming that Tingles the Ears. Let us examine for Inſtance, the firſt Period in *Tullies* Orations, the Exordium of his famous Oration, *Pro Pub. Quintio*; which is looked upon to be one of his moſt celebrated Compoſitions. It begins thus, *Quæ* duæ *res in Civitate plurimum* poſſunt, *eæ contra nos* ambæ faciunt, *in hoc Tempore, ſumma* Gratia *et* Eloquentia; *quarum alteram, C. Aquili,* vereor *alteram* metuo: *Eloquentia Q.* Hortenſii *ne me dicendo* impediat *nonnihil* commoveor, *Gratia Sexti* Nevii, *ne P. Quintio* noceat, *id vero non mediocriter pertimeſco.* Now what an abundance

dance of Nice and Uſeleſs Art is here? Our Orator, I am ſure, in this Place does *librare in Antithetis*, as *Perſius* ſpeaks, to a nauſeouſneſs; he ranges each Word ſo preciſely in its Place, as if he was planting an Orchard, and ſetting Trees by the Rule, with whole Rows of oppoſite Words to anſwer one another. Here is *Ambæ* ſet againſt *Duæ*, *poſſunt* againſt *faciunt*, *Eloquentia* againſt *Gratia*, *Hortenſius* againſt *Nævius*, and *metuo* againſt *vereor*; with a *noceat* to anſwer to the *impediat*, and *pertimeſco* to *commoveor*. Now to think ſeriouſly, Was it worth our Orators while, to make all this Rhetorical ſtir, and to ſpend ſo much Time, as this coſt him, to Varniſh over this one Period; which no wiſe Man would like the better, and the Silleſt would not be the more Convinced by? For my Part, I muſt freely give my Opinion, that ſuch a laborious curiouſneſs in Style, as this is, has no more in it of true Eloquence, than the Writing Anagrams and Acroſticks.

And I muſt needs, yet think worſe of them, when the Orators follow thoſe Nicer Punctilio's of Rhetorick, ſticking Figures about their Orations, as the Ladies do Patches, meaſuring out their Periods to ſuch preciſe Lengths, and molding them according to *Demetrius Phalereus* his Rule,

into three Members; or making them to begin with *Anapæſtus*'s, and End with *Dichorees*. Nay, I am almoſt confident *Philologus*, that you your ſelf, upon the moſt mature Conſideration, muſt allow, that the unaffected Gravity of the Scripture Style is much leſs liable to Cenſure, than ſuch an elaborate Curioſity.

*Seeming Uncouthneſs from the Literal Tranſlation.*

4. But next, I would have you to take Notice, that the ſeeming Uncouthneſs of ſome Expreſſions in Scripture, which makes ſome of you Unbelievers to deſpiſe it, does ariſe from the Literal Tranſlation, which moſt of you read it in, without having recourſe to the Original; which if you did, it would give quite another Turn and Appearance to thoſe Thoughts, which may look odd or mean to you now. The Tranſlation of the Bible does appear with leſs Advantage than the Verſions of other Books, becauſe in thoſe the Tranſlators take a greater Liberty to accommodate the Idiotiſms of the Language; in which their Authors wrote, to thoſe of that into which they Tranſlate him; but the Tranſlators of the Bible, tranſlate the very Hebraiſms they find in the Original; for that being a Divine Compoſition, the Tranſlator ought not to make ſo bold with, by limiting

miting the Senſe of that, as he might with another Book, but to leave thoſe Hebraical Phraſes in the Text ſtill; ſo that the Reader may paſs his Judgment of them as well as the Tranſlator.

Now when we read the Tranſlation of any other Author, which is literally done as this is; it looks altogether as uncouth as the *Engliſh* of our ordinary Tranſlation of the Bible. What poor ſorry Stuff would it look like, to read a Page of the Common *Latin* Tranſlation of *Homer* or *Pindar*, without the *Greek*? Theſe two noble Poets, in this Diſguiſe, would not appear half ſo good Writers as the Author of *Chivy Chaſe*. Or ſuppoſe, that one ſhould pretend to ſhew an *Engliſh* Gentleman or Lady, who did not underſtand *Latin*, the Beauties of *Horace* his *Odes*, by this Verbal Tranſlation of the two firſt Verſes:

*Mæcenas atavis edite Regibus*
*O et præſidium & dulce decus meum*, &c.

*Mæcenas who art put forth from great Grandfather Kings, O and my Safeguard, and my ſweet Grace*, &c. This would look as wretchedly, to ſuch a Gentleman or Lady of good Senſe, as any Part of the *Engliſh* Bible does to your Witty Infidels. But the

Tranſlation of the Bible from the Original, is altogether as Verbal as this. Now would it be Juſtice, that *Horace* ſhould be expoſed for the ſake of ſuch a ſtrict Verſion, by one who did not underſtand the Elegancies of the Original *Latinities?* The Expreſſion being *put forth* to ſignifie a genealogical Deſcent is ſtrangely uncouth in *Engliſh*, and yet *Editus* is commonly uſed to ſignifie this in *Latin*, being a Metaphor taken from the putting forth of Branches out of the Stem of a Tree. Though the *Latins* ſay, *& præſidium, & decus*, the *Engliſh* don't expreſs a double Copulative by two *Ands*. Neither do the *Engliſh* ſay, in the Abſtract *Guard* or *Safeguard*, but *Guardian* or *Tutelar*. We don't call any one our *Grace* or Ornament: But to ſay *ſweet Grace* is yet more uncouth; though *dulce decus* among the *Romans* was an uſual flattering Phraſe to expreſs a dearneſs to thoſe they Loved, which we never uſe.

And the Caſe would be the ſame, if our *Engliſh* Idiotiſms were Tranſlated into any other Language. Our common Expreſſions, *to ſet a Copy*, *to make a Trade*, *to look to ones Hits*, *to fetch a Turn*, *to be brought a Bed*, *Jack a Nokes* for a Fool, *a Canary-Bird* for a Knave, *Will with a Wiſp*, *Jack-a-Lanthorn*, &c. Would ſeem very odd

if

if literally Tranſlated into any other Language; and ſo would an hundred *French* or *Italian* Expreſſions in ours. Therefore I muſt conclude, it is a very ridiculous and ignorant Pride, in a great many Gentlemen of your way, to make Sport with the Scripture for a few *Hebrew* Idioms, that do not exactly Correſpond with our Modern Phraſes. There are a great many Expreſſions in Scripture, which are Alluſions to ancient Cuſtoms, which are now grown obſolete, and which there are no Traces left of in Hiſtory, which may make them for that Reaſon, ſeem to us flat and jejune, though in the Time when they were wrote they carried with them a great deal of Spirit and Brightneſs. Now to Laugh at the Scripture for theſe Idiotiſms and Alluſions do ſhew as much Wit, as to Laugh at the Images of the Old *Greeks* and *Romans*, becauſe they are not dreſſed in our Modern Faſhions, or to make Sport with our Grandfathers Pictures, becauſe they are not drawn in long-Wiggs and Cravats. For 'tis altogether as ridiculous to think, that the Ancient *Hebrews* ſhould ſpeak like us any more than that they ſhould go habited, as we do.

Beſides in every Language there are certain peculiar Graces in the Contexture of the

the Words, in the Cadence of the Periods, many other *Schemata Lexeos*, a beautiful ranging of Particles, a graceful Analogy and Relation between ſeveral Words which are all loſt in the Tranſlation, and which Men muſt be well verſed in the Original, to have a Taſt of. Now to undervalue the Style of the Scriptures without having ſearched into theſe, is as wiſe and modeſt an Undertaking as to pretend to Criticiſe upon *Virgils* Style from our *Engliſh* Tranſlations.

There are ſeveral Beauties in the Original Scriptures, which are vaniſhed in our Verſions, by the ill Tranſlation of *Hebrew* Words, which have a various Signification, and our Interpreters ſometimes light upon the wrong, ſo that by this means oftentimes, a very noble Alluſion becomes Flat and Unaffecting.

Sometimes the Speeches of Mean and Unlearned People are *Verbatim* inſerted, the Sacred Writers not giving themſelves the Liberty of making for them Rhetorical *Ethopœia*'s; and therefore in thoſe Caſes it is unreaſonable to expect all the Elegances of a Caſtigated Style. In ſhort, the whole *Eaſtern* way of Speaking and Writing, is ſo widely different from our *European* Eloquence, that to expect a Tranſlation of the Scriptures, which were wrote in thoſe Nations,

tions, to read like our Modern Books, is as fooliſh a Thought as to Fancy, that Nature ought to have made their Camels like our Horſes. I ſhall Conclude this Head with the Opinion of *Jamblicus*. Ου γὰρ πάντως τὴν αὐτὴν διατώζει διάνοιαν μεθερμενευόμενα ὀνόματα, &c. Words do not retain the ſame meaning, when they are Tranſlated into another Language; for there are certain Idiotiſms, in every Language, which are impoſſible to be expreſſed in another; or if they are Tranſlated, they will looſe their Original force. For barbarous Languages have a great deal of Emphaſis, a great deal of graceful Brevity, and have leſs of Ambiguity and Redundancy of Words.

*Scriptures truly Eloquent.*

5. And laſt of all, I will not allow you, that the Scriptures are deſtitute of true and genuine Eloquence, but I contend that the Style of it is ſo far from being contemptible, that in many Places it is admirable. I do not pretend to prove the Style of all the Scripture to be truly Eloquent from *Ariſtotles* Rhetorick or *Quintilians* Inſtitutions, and to prove the Sacred Writers to come up to the Laws laid down in thoſe Books; for, as I obſerved before, thoſe are only the Laws of the *Greek* and *Latin* Eloquence, and drawn out of their Orators.

But

But if we consider the Nature of Eloquence in General, and as *Aristotle* defines, to be a Faculty of Persuasion, the Holy Writings lay as fair a claim to it, as any of the Prophane Compositions. There are but four principal Qualifications, to make any Book or Oration persuasive in the highest Degree; And those are, That the subject of it be Truth, or at least Verisimilar; That the Arguments to prove this be fit and proper; That the Subject be so treated, that the Passions of the Hearers or Readers be engaged for it; and Lastly, That the Eloquence be suited to the Capacities of those, who are to be persuaded by it. If any Composition does answer in all these Particulars, let it be wrote in *Gothick* or in *Welch*, it is notwithstanding True and Genuine Eloquence.

*Arist. Rhet. Lib. 1. Cap. 2.*

*Subject of the Scripture Verisimilar.*

You cannot but allow that the Subject Matter of the Holy Scriptures, if not True, is at least *Verisimilar*, it does not, like *Philoloſtratus* his History, Treat of Witches and Dragons and other unheard of Animals, with the wonderful Operations of Magical Plants; it is not lyable to the Exceptions against *Homer* and *Virgil*, for making Men turn into Hoggs, and Ships into Goddesses.

ſes. Indeed there are in it the Relations of ſeveral Miracles; but then thoſe Miracles are attributed to the one Supream God, who is the Governour of Nature, and not to ſubordinate Dæmons (as the *Pagans* do in their Theology) who have no Power over it. Beſides, theſe Miracles, are not done like the pretended *Heathen* ones to gratifie Luſt or Revenge, or ſome other wicked or capricious Deſign, but for the juſteſt and wiſeſt Ends, for the Salvation of Mens Souls, and the eſtabliſhing among them True Religion. Now, though ſuch miraculous Relations be ſtrange, they are not incredible; becauſe there is aſſigned to do them greateſt Power, and for doing them the greateſt Reaſon.

*The Arguments Concluſive.*

And you muſt needs likewiſe grant, that the Arguments, which the Holy Scriptures make uſe of, are very Concluſive. What better Arguments can be urged, than thoſe in the Old Teſtament againſt Idolatry; by ſhewing the *Unity* of God, from his Creation of the Univerſe, and making all things but His Eternal Self, by ſhewing that he is a *Jealous* God, whoſe Honour is engaged to admit no Partnerſhip in the Divine Worſhip; by engaging the *Jews* to this, from his delivering them out of *Egypt*, by an Argument

gument drawn both from his own *Omnipotence* and their *Gratitude*; by ſhewing the *Cruelty* and *Diabolical* Worſhip of Idolatry, which required them to *give their Sons and Daughters unto Devils?* Where can we find any more ſtrenuous Proof of the Sottiſhneſs of Worſhipping Images, than when they are expoſed in Scripture, for having *Eyes and Seeing not, and Ears and Hearing not*, that is being out of a Capacity of relieving their Votaries, and when the ſame Carpenter that hew'd the Logg is ſo fooliſh to fall down and worſhip it? To which if you add the repeated Promiſes of God for their Continuance in the True Religion, and his Threats for their forſaking it, which are every where urged in the Old Teſtament; I defie the Wit of Man to find out, more Proper and Concluſive Arguments againſt Idolatry, than are to be found there. Now if it was one of the moſt Principal Deſigns of the Books of the Old Teſtament to perſuade Men againſt Idolatry, and the beſt Arguments againſt Idolatry be to be found in it, then thoſe Books are not deſtitute of true Eloquence. And ſo, if you conſider the Books of the New Teſtament; if they clearly make out what they pretend to, that true Religion does not conſiſt in External Ceremony but in honouring God and doing good

good to our Neighbour, and living vertuouſly and ſoberly; that Men ought to mortifie their unruly Affections, and to deſpiſe the Pleaſures of this World; that nothing we can do or ſuffer for Chriſts ſake is comparable to his Love to us, and to the immortal Glories which he has purchaſed for us; if, I ſay, they do this, as you Unbelievers muſt allow this Reaſoning upon the Chriſtian Principles to be Juſt, then theſe Books are as Eloquent and Perſuaſive as any in the World. Unleſs you think that Eloquence conſiſts only in a curious Choice of Words, in neatneſs of Method, in Tuneful Periods and lame *Probabilities* or *Maybe*'s inſtead of Proof, which is the true Character of moſt of the Prophane Compoſitions; and this there muſt not be allow'd to the Holy Scriptures, which ſpeak in Demonſtration and Power, and make out what they pretend to, to the Confuſion of thoſe Readers, that are oftentimes unwilling to be perſuaded by them; which I think is too partial a Judgment for any wiſe Man to make.

*They move the Paſſions.*

Or if Moving the Paſſions be any Sign of True Eloquence, what Book in the World is more framed to do it than the Scriptures? What do the little warmths, that may be raiſed in

in the Fancy by an artful Compoſure and a vehemence in Style, ſignifie to thoſe ſtrong Impulſes and Movements which the Holy Scriptures make upon Good Mens Souls; when they repreſent the frightful Juſtice of an Angry God to ſtubborn Offenders, and his Bowels of Compaſſion and unſpeakable Kindneſs to true Penitents and Gods faithful Servants? What are thoſe ordinary Methods to move the Paſſions, which the Prophane Orators uſed, to compare with the Scripture Motives of Heaven and Hell? Theſe preſs ſo hard upon all the Faculties of the Soul, that there is no withſtanding them when attended to, they Create ſo much uneaſineſs in Wicked Men when ever they think, that they uſe all the Art they can to keep them out of their Minds, for fear of being over perſuaded by them; or that they may not have their Conſcience upbraid them, for doing thoſe Things, which will looſe them ſuch Advantage and bring them into ſuch Miſery. Think you that *Cicero*, with all his Eloquence, could have made ſuch an hardened Sinner as *Felix* tremble, as St. *Paul* did; or, like St. *Peter*, have perſuaded by one Speech Three Thouſand Perſons, to have embraced a deſpiſed Religion, to part with all they had for the Uſe of the Poor, and to

expoſe

expoſe themſelves for the Sake of this to ſuffer Contumely and Hatred, and Perſecution? When you have thought of this a little, you will be conſtrain'd to own that there is a force in the Divine Eloquence, which the beſt Humane Compoſitions can never pretend to.

*Their Eloquence ſuited to the Capacities they ſpeak to.*

And laſtly, if it be any Mark of True Eloquence, to ſpeak agreeably to the Capacities of the Generality of the Hearers or Readers; then the Holy Scriptures have obſerved this Point better than moſt Books. Grandure of Style may be proper in a Panegyrick upon a Prince, in an Oration to a Learned Aſſembly, in an Heroick Poem or a Tragedy; but what is compoſed for the uſe of the Ignorant as well as the Learned, ought to be wrote in the moſt plain and familiar way as is poſſible; for in ſuch a Caſe a Majeſtick Eloquence would be more ridiculous than the moſt unpoliſhed *Plebian* Style. Therefore to talk great and noble Truths, in plain and familiar Language, is the hight of the Art of Eloquence: For *Faſtus* and *Tumor* in Style are common enough to every one, who have any thing of a Spirit or any thing of a Subject; and therefore the Scripture Eloquence can never be enough admired; for

handling ſuch noble Subjects, in ſuch a familiar way, as is adapted to the Underſtandings of the Meaneſt. And all conſidering Men muſt own, that our Saviours plain Alluſions to a Way, a Vine, to Corn, Sheep, *&c.* being directed to ordinary People, are far more Eloquent, than if he had ſpoke in the rapturous flights of *Plato*'s Dialogues. For by this, the end of Eloquence is loſt; for no one can be perſuaded by what he does not underſtand.

*Scriptures not void of Rhetorical Figures.*

Thus, I think, I have ſuffiently proved that the Holy Scriptures are not wanting in True Eloquence; though they may not come up in all Particulars to that Eloquence which was in faſhion at *Athens* and *Rome*, and may not agree with the nice Rules of their Rhetors. But if it will be any Satisfaction to you, I will ſhew you further in a Word or two, that moſt of thoſe admired Beauties, in the *Pagan* Eloquence, are not wanting in the Scriptural; and that oftentimes the Scripture comes up even to their Magnificence of Style and Cadence of Period. It would be too long a Piece of Work for my Purpoſe, to run through the whole Syſtem of Rhetorick, to ſhew the Eloquence of the Scripture as to all theſe Particulars; though I doubt not, but

but one might pick out of Scripture Examples for every Figure, as good, perhaps, as are alledged out of *Tully* himſelf. But for a Specimen of this, I will inſtance in two or three; and you at your Leiſure, if you think it worth your while, may take notice of more. The Figure *Anaphora* is looked upon, to be a very florid and beautiful Figure in Rhetorick; which is, when all the Members of a Period begin with the ſame Word; as in that of *Cicero, Orat.* in Cat. 1. *Nihil te Nocturnum preſidium Palatii? Nihil Urbis vigiliæ? Nihil timor Populi? Nihil Conſenſio bonorum omnium? Nihil hic munitiſſimus habendi Senatus locus? Nihil horum Ora vultuſque moverunt?* Are you *nothing* moved by the nightly Guard of the Palace? *Nothing* by the Watches about the City? *Nothing* by the Fear of the People? *Nothing* by the joint Opinion of all good Men? *Nothing* by the Senates being held with a Guard? *Nothing* by the Faces and Looks of thoſe here preſent. Now this is all very fine, but I know not whether the ſame Figure is not as handſomely dreſſed out in the XVth *Pſalm*, *Lord*, who *ſhall abide in thy Tabernacle?* Who *ſhall dwell in thy Holy Hill?* He *that walketh uprightly*, &c. He *that backbiteth not with his Tongue*, &c.

*Anaphora.*

He *that honoureth them that fear the Lord*, He *that ſweareth to his Hurt and changeth not*; He *that putteth not out his Money to Uſury, nor taketh Reward againſt the Innocent*; He *that doth theſe Things ſhall never be moved.*

*Anadiploſis.* That *Anadiploſis* of *Virgil* is much admired.

——*Sequitur pulcherrimus* Aſtur,
Aſtur *Equo fidens* ——

——Next follows faireſt *Aſtur*,
*Aſtur* relying on his Horſe ——

But this redoubling of the principal Word comes in as curiouſly in that of the *Pſalmiſt*, *Our Feet ſhall ſtand within thy Gates*, O Jeruſalem: Jeruſalem, *which is built as a City that is compact together*, Pſalm CXXII. 2.

*Climax.* They magnifie the Beauty of that *Climax* or regular Gradation from one Thing to another in *Cicero*. *In urbe Luxuries Creatur, ex Luxuria exiſtat Avaritia neceſſe eſt, ex avaritia erumpat audacia inde omnia ſcelera & maleficia naſcuntur. In the City grows Luxury, from Luxury ariſes Avarice, from Avarice ſprings Boldneſs, and that is the Parent of all Wickedneſs and Villanies.* Now is not that *Climax* of St. Paul

*Paul* altogether as good? *Knowing that Tribulation worketh Patience, and Patience Experience, and Experience Hope, and Hope maketh not aſhamed*, Rom. 5. 3. Or that of St. *Peter? Add to your Faith Virtue, and to Vertue Knowledge, and to Knowledge Temperance, and to Temperance Patience*, &c. 2 *Pet.* 1. 5.

That *Auxeſis* or *growing of a Sentence* in *Tully* is Remarkable, *Facinus eſt vincire Civem* Romanum, *ſcelus verberare, prope Parricidium necare, quid dicam in Crucem tollere? It is a Crime to bind a* Roman *Citizen, it is a Villany to ſcourge him, it is the Act of a Parricide to Kill him, but what ſhall I ſay to crucifie him?* But the beginning of St. *Johns* firſt Epiſtle is a nobler Amplification, where the Increaſe is more graceful, and the Tumor of the Sentence leſs. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have ſeen with our Eyes. which we have looked upon, and our Hands have handled of the Word of Life.* Here is an exact Gradation throughout all the Degrees of Certainty. He begins with the being of Chriſt and his Eternity, which Incarnate Word was *heard* by him, having the Evidence of a yet more faithful Senſe was *ſeen*, and not only Tranſitorily ſo, but *lookt upon*, and had the farther

*Auxeſis.*

ther Teſtimony of a Sence which is of all the moſt infallible, *which our Hands have handled.* The Rhetoricians would have made a mighty Work with this Sentence, had they found it in *Tully*, which they are wont to overlook and deſpiſe in the Apoſtle.

*Antitheſis.* The old Orators take a great Pride in ranging finely their *Antitheta*, but I queſtion, whether or no the Scriptural Writers do not manage theirs as gracefully. *He that killeth an Ox, as if he ſlew a Man, he that ſacrificeth a Lamb, as if he cut of a Dogs Neck: He that offereth an Oblation, as if he offered Swines Blood*, &c. *Iſa.* 66. 3. *Inſtead of a ſweet Smell there ſhall be ſtench, and inſtead of a Girdle a Rent, and inſtead of well-ſet-hair Baldneſs, and inſtead of a Stomacher a Girdle of Sack-cloth, and Burning inſtead of Beauty.*

*Exclamation.* There is a very beautiful warmth in proper Exclamations, as in *Tullies, O Tempora! O Mores! O fruſtra mei ſuſcepti Labores!* But there is not one, that ever I read in all *Tullies* Works, comparable to that of St. *Paul*, upon the Divine Diſpenſation in the Call of the *Gentiles* and the Rejection of the *Jews*. *O the Depth of the Riches both of the Wiſdom and Knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his*

*Judge-*

*Judgements, and his Ways paſt finding out!* Here is ſuch a noble Vehemence as fires ones Thoughts, and of a ſudden Tranſports ones Soul with Aſtoniſhment and Divine Love.

But the moſt charming Figure among the Orators and Poets, and which they Love to be Luxuriant in, is the Hypotypoſis or Lively Deſcription. Now there are many of theſe in the Holy Scripture, which will equal the beſt among the *Pagan* Writers. As for Inſtance, that of the *Ægyptians* Drowning, *Exod.* 15. in the Song of *Moſes* and *Miriam:* The Deſcription of the Leviathan, *Job* 41. The going out of God, *Pſalm* 18. The Storms at Sea, *Pſalm* 107. The Intrigues of an Adulterous Woman, *Prov.* 7. The Pride of the *Jewiſh* Ladies, *Iſa.* 4. The Folly of the Idol-maker, *Iſa.* 44. And laſtly, the incomparable Deſcription of the Plague of Locuſts in the ſecond Chapter of *Joel*, which he repreſents like the ravaging a Countrey, and ſtorming of a City by an Army. The Invention and Expreſſion of it are moſt admirable, and it deſerves to be eſteemed as one of the moſt curious Deſcriptions of Antiquity. And if the Paſſage be not too long I will repeat it to you. *A great People and a ſtrong, there hath not been ever the like, neither ſhall there be any more after it, even to the* *Hypotypoſis.*

*Years of many Generations. A Fire devoureth before them, and behind them a Flame burneth, the Land is as the Garden of* Eden *before them, and behind them a deſolate Wilderneſs, and nothing ſhall eſcape them. The Appearance of them is as the Appearance of Horſes, and as Horſemen, ſo ſhall they run. Like the Noiſe of Chariots in the Tops of Mountains ſhall they leap, like the noiſe of a flame of Fire, that devoureth the ſtubble, as a ſtrong People ſet in Battle aray. Before their Face People ſhall be much pained, all Faces ſhall gather blackneſs. They ſhall run like mighty Men, they ſhall climb the Wall like Men of War, and they ſhall March every one on his Ways, and they ſhall not break their Ranks. Neither ſhall one thruſt another, they ſhall walk every one in his Path, and when they fall upon the Sword, they ſhall not be wounded. They ſhall run to and fro in the City, they ſhall run upon the Wall, they ſhall climb up upon the Houſes: They ſhall enter in at the Windows like a Thief,* &c. This Deſcription is the more remarkable, becauſe the Analogy is carried on from one end to the other, ſo very decently and without any force; and if one was only to deſcribe the outrages of an Army without the Metaphor, it could hardly be done better, than by the regularneſs of their March, eating up the Proviſi-

on,

on, Burning the Country, the Horror of the People, the Scaling the Walls, Running about thro' the conquered City, Breaking into Houſes, *&c.*

Nay, I will contend further, that in ſome whole Books, and in many Paſſages of Scripture, there is as much magnificence and Sublimity of Expreſſion, and ſometimes the Compoſitions are as much according to the Rhetorical Laws, as in thoſe of the moſt celebrated Heathen. And St. *Auſtine* in his Treatiſe *de Doctrina Chriſti* has proved ſuch an artificial Compoſure in that Paſſage of St. *Paul*, Rom. 8. 38. *For I am perſuaded that neither Death nor Life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor heighth, nor depth, nor any other Creature, ſhall be able to ſeparate us from the Love of God which is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.* But whether or no the Apoſtle did deſignedly divide his ſentence into thoſe Rhetorical Members, as that Father would have him; yet it is plain that the Eloquence, in this Chapter, is very noble from the 33. *verſe* to the end. *Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that juſtifieth? Who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died, yea rather,* &c. *Who ſhall ſeparate us from the Love of Chriſt? Shall Tribulation, or Diſtreſs, or Perſecution, or Famine,*

*mine, or Nakedneſs, or Peril, or Sword? (As it is written, for thy ſake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as Sheep for the ſlaughter) nay in all theſe things we are more than Conquerors, through him that loved us.* The like Majeſtick Eloquence we find diſplayed, 1 *Cor.* 4. 9. in ſpeaking of the Hardſhips of the Apoſtles. *God hath ſet forth us the Apoſtles laſt as it were Men appointed to Death. For we are made a ſpectacle unto the World, and to Angels, and to Men. We are fools for Chriſts ſake, but ye are wiſe in Chriſt: We are weak but ye are ſtrong: Ye are honourable, but we are deſpiſed: Even unto this preſent hour we both hunger and thirſt, and are naked, and are Buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place, and labour working with our own hands: Being reviled we bleſs: perſecuted we ſuffer it: Being defamed we intreat: We are made as the filth of the World, and are the Off-ſcouring of things unto this day.* The Eloquence of this Period is ſo noble and affecting, and it is ſo artificially compoſed, that I will be bound to equal it with any one in the Orations of *Cicero* or *Demoſthenes*; even according to *Ariſtotles* and *Quintilians* Rules. Nor is this Apoſtles Vindication of himſelf, 2 *Cor.* 11. 21. any thing inferiour: *Whereinſoever any is bold, I ſpeak fooliſhly, I am bold alſo. Are they Hebrews?*

*brews? ſo am I. Are they Iſraelites? ſo am I. Are they the Seed of* Abraham? *ſo am I. Are they the Miniſters of Chriſt? I ſpeak as a Fool, I am more, in Labours more abundant, in Stripes above meaſure, in Priſons more frequent, in Deaths oft. Of the Jews Five times received I Forty Stripes ſave one, Thrice was I beaten with Rods, Once was I Stoned, Thrice I ſuffered Ship-wrack, A Night and a Day I have been in the Deep. In Journeyings often, in perils of Waters, in perils of Robbers, in perils by my own Countrymen, in perils by the Heathen, in perils in the City, in perils in the Wilderneſs, in perils in the Sea, in perils among falſe Brethren. In Wearineſs and Painfulneſs, in Watchings often, in Hunger and Thirſt, in Faſtings often, in Cold and Nakedneſs, beſides thoſe things which are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the Care of all the Churches.* Hitherto the Diviſion and Cadence of every Period has been very Rhetorical, and agreeable to the exacteſt Rule of Art, and nicety of Ear; and the matter all along truly Sublime; but at the next verſe the Apoſtle's eloquence is yet more ſurprizing. *Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is offended and I burn not? If I muſt needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern my Infirmities.* Here the Heroicalneſs of the Apoſtle's Religion inſpires his

his Style with a new degree of Sublimity, and gives it ſuch a Turn of Grandure and Nobleneſs of Thought, as is unimitable by Pagan Eloquence. Thoſe Infirmitie, which they would have palliated and ſhaddowed off by little extenuations, for fear of touching upon their Reputation and affected Fame, he values himſelf upon, as the Glory of his Religion, and the brave Conqueſt of the Fleſh by the Grace of God under the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, which the Heathen Morality knew nothing of.

I have not time to compare the ſacred Deſcription of Things with thoſe of the Pagans in their Books, in which they endeavour to ſhew the Maſter-piece of their Eloquence; and yet I doubt not but I could ſhew, in many particulars, that the Scripture ones are the ſuperior: As for inſtance in the deſcription of the Morning; do the Heathens better deſcribe it by the *Roſy-fingered Morn*, by *Aurora's leaving Tithon's Bed*, than the Scripture's, *the day ſpring from on high hath viſited us*, and comparing the Sun at that time to a *Bridegroom's coming out of his Chamber, and rejoycing like an* Athletick *to run a Race?* The Deſcription of *Virgil* is very juſt upon that occaſion:

*Di-*

*Obſtupui ſteterunq; comæ & vox faucibus hæſit*, &c.

But it is not comparable to that of *Job* 14. 13. *In thoughts from the Viſions of the Night, when deep ſleep falleth on Men. Fear came upon me and Trembling, which made all my Bones to ſhake. Then a Spirit paſſed by before my face, the hair of my Fleſh ſtood up. It ſtood ſtill but I could not diſcern the form thereof; an Image before my eyes! ſilence. And I heard a voice.* In ſhort, *Philologus*, if you will but accuſtom your ſelf to reading the Holy Scriptures and come to them without prejudice and a mind to Cavil, you will find that the Style of theſe Books is in all places agreeable, and in ſome moſt admirable; and if God gives you Grace to have your mind affected with a true Spirit of Holineſs, you will experience the moſt comfortable and raviſhing Reading in this of any Book in the World.

*Phil.* This may be ſo for ought I know; but I am ſure I have juſt exceptions againſt the Method, the Scriptural Books are wrote in. If the Holy Ghoſt had any hand in theſe Compoſitions, one might well expect that they ſhould be wrote with the utmoſt exactneſs; ſo that there ſhould not appear the leaſt careleſneſs or confuſion in any of theſe Books. We may obſerve even in the Hu-

Human Compoſitions of Pagan Authors, in how curious an order all things are ranged, and how decently every Argument and Relation falls into its place; which agreeable Harmony and ſymmetry of Parts ſurprizes the Reader with a wonderful Delight. But how ſtrangely defective in this all the Authors in the Bible are, every Reader cannot but experience. In the Hiſtorical parts one Story is jumbled together with another, what happened laſt in time is often told firſt, ſeveral material parts of the Hiſtory are omitted, and other impertinent and uſeleſs ones are recorded; and we frequently find that one Relation is brought in upon the back of another, with which it has no manner of Correſpondence. And ſo in the Exhortatory and Argumentative parts of Scripture, the Arguments lye ſo confuſedly interwoven with one another, that ſometimes it is almoſt impoſſible to underſtand the force of them; there are ſuch long and unnatural Digreſſions, and unlookt for Reaſſumptions of the former Arguments, that the moſt rambling Thinker hardly ever gives up his thoughts to ſo wide a Range.

*Cred.* But all this, *Philologus*, is great Miſrepreſentation and Miſtake; which will be very evident if you will be pleaſed to go along

along with me, in theſe following Conſiderations.

1. You ſhould conſider, that this curious Method, which you ſo much admire in the Pagan Authors, is but an Artificial way of Writing, which came into faſhion only in *Greece* and *Rome*; and that in latter Ages too, and long after the time, in which many of theſe Books were wrote. Method was a ſort of Art or Science which was invented and cultivated firſt at *Athens*, and the Rules of it laid down by Philoſophers for Authors to obſerve in their Writings; and which all, who were educated in the Diſcipline of the *Greek* Schools, tied themſelves up to. But it is unreaſonable to expect, that the Jewiſh Writers ſhould bind themſelves to theſe Artificial Rules, which they were perfectly Strangers to, and which were never taught them in their way of Education. Should a Jewiſh Writer have divided his Book into thoſe nice Partitions, which the Pagan Authors are wont to do, he would have been univerſally condemned by the People of his Country for Affectatious Pedantry. Thoſe Eaſtern Nations who were us'd to a free way of Diſcourſe, and whoſe Notions were not cramped up by Methodical Limitations, would never have en-

*Method an Art invented by the Heathens.*

endured a Writer who ſhould tie himſelf up to diſtinct Heads of Diſcourſe, as is our *European* Cuſtom to do; and a Book wrote after that rate would to them have been as ridiculous, as an *Oration* would be to us, whoſe Arguments ſhould all run in exact *Barbara* and *Celarent*, or which ſhould be made up of the ſtarched Exordiums, Ratio's and Confirmations of a School Boys Theme.

*Method uſeleſs,*

2. But beſides this, I would deſire you to conſider with your ſelf, if Method be not too nice a thing to ſtand upon in a matter of ſo high an importance as the Holy Scriptures. Is Method a thing at all looked upon in a Phyſitians Bill? Does any Man in the leaſt value it in a Lawyers Conveyance? and therefore, what reaſon have we to expect ſo much of it in the ſacred Writings? Theſe Books are of ſo vaſt and ſo important a Concern, that if the Holy Ghoſt had condeſcended to have limitted himſelf to thoſe Nice Rules, which many Human Compoſitions are adapted to, you Unbelievers would have been more ready to have cenſured his ſtooping to ſuch Punctilios, than now you are to find fault with that freedom of Thought and Inaccuracy of Method, which is to be diſcerned frequently in theſe Authors.

3. This

3. This want of Artificial Method is more agreeable to the Nature of Inſpiration: Inſpiration is the language of another *World*, ſomething of the Reaſoning of Spirits which is, without all doubt, vaſtly different from our Human Argumentation. We, to make things lie plainly before our groſs Underſtandings, muſt ſort them out into diſtinct Partitions, to conſider them by little and little, that at laſt by gradual Advances we may come to a tolerable knowledge of them; but there is no cauſe to think that pure Spirits do reaſon after this rate. Their Underſtandings are more quick and perceptive, and they ſee further round about them than ours do; and they have not need of thoſe little Methodical Diſtinctions which are wont oftentimes to be a great help to our more imperfect Intellects. Now, though I do not aſſert that the Language of the Holy Scriptures is an exact Copy of the Reaſoning of the Spiritual World, yet, they being the Inſpiration of the Holy Ghoſt, it is but reaſonable to expect, that they ſhould retain ſome ſmall reliſh of the Ratiocination of the ſuperiour Communities as well as a *Book*, which is tranſlated out of one Language in-

*Neglect of Method more anſwerable to Inſpiration,*

to another, continues to have ſome marks to ſhew of the Tongue it was firſt compoſed in. Hence it comes to paſs that, though the Holy Ghoſt does vouchſafe to ſpeak in the Language of Men, yet in his Divine Compoſitions there are ſome Traces to be found of the *Celeſtial Lingua*, and of that bold and unlimited Ratiocination, which is peculiar to the Heavenly Inhabitants, whoſe noble and flaming thoughts are never clogged with the cold and jejune Laws of our Human Method. And this was a Truth which the Heathens themſelves were not inſenſible of; for in all their Pretences to Inſpiration, they continually neglect the Laws of Method, as being too Human to have any thing to do in a Divine Compoſition. And, upon this account, whenever the Poets bring in *Sibyl*, or *Caſſandra*, or *Tireſias*, or any other inſpired Perſon, they nevermade ſuch an one to make a ſet Methodical Speech, but to ſay ſomething more noble and ſublime which did diſdain any of our ordinary artificial Fetters. Now if the greateſt Maſters and Criticks in your Philological Learnings, did think it moſt proper, that this ſhould be the Tenour of an inſpired Compoſition, that is, to neglect all Methodical Rules; why ſhould you find fault with

with the Holy Scriptures, for the very ſame thing, which you admire in *Sophocles* and *Virgil*?

4. But after all, the Holy Scriptures are not deſtitute of that Method which is requiſite for the due underſtanding of a Book, and the agreeable Reading of it. Indeed ſome Writers thoughts lie ſo horridly perplexed and confounded in their Books that there is hardly any taking their meaning or reading them with any tolerable pleaſure. But this is not the caſe of the Sacred Pen-Men. Their Books are wrote in a very proper and regular Method, and though not in all the formalities of the *Greek* and *Latin* Plann, yet in ſuch a way as is eaſy to be underſtood, and not unpleaſant to be read, but even beautiful to thoſe who are accuſtomed to the Oriental Compoſitions. Can any one expect any Hiſtory to be more Methodical than that of *Moſes*? Does not he very orderly give an Univerſal Hiſtory of the World to his time, beginning at the firſt Creation of all Things, and the formation of Human kind, proceeding to give an account of their Increaſe and Depravation, and their almoſt total Deſtruction by an Univerſal Deluge; and after that, upon their ſpreading again, relates their Relapſe

*Method not wholly wanting in Scripture.*

into Idolatry; and thereupon God's electing out a peculiar People to serve him the only true God according to his particular appointment; recording the first Original and various success of their Primary Progenitors, the Afflictions and Wanderings of that chosen Nation, and their Polity which they were to observe when they should be settled in the Promised Land? It is impossible that any *Greek* or *Latin* Historian should be more Methodical than this Writer. And so the other Historians of the Old Testament, who write the Transactions of the Jewish Nation from their Conquest of the Land of *Canaan*, to the *Babylonian* Captivity, do most methodically observe the order of time, and what is yet more, do set down the manner of the Years of Princes reigns, and so exactly reckon from other remarkable Epochas of Time that the Prophane Histories are no way comparable to them, and which afford a better foundation for Chronology than any is to be found among the *Greek* and *Latin* Historians. Do not the Evangelists most methodically begin with Christ's Incarnation, and end with his Crucifixion and Resurrection, and all along declare his Preaching and miraculous Actions? Nay, is not there a methodical Design running throughout the whole Tenor of all these

theſe Hiſtories, wherein one uniform Thred of Providence is diſcovered, and all the ancient Types, and remarkable Tranſactions do fall in with, or make way for the Kingdom of the *Meſſias?* And ſo for the Argumentative and Exhortatory parts of Scripture there is a Method enough to make them intelligible, and though the Partitions and Tranſactions are not ſo formally diſtinct as in ſome other Books, yet they are plain enough to be diſcerned by any careful Reader. Neither is it ſo proper that Epiſtolary (and ſuch like Diſcourſes) ſhould be ſo exactly Methodical; for, as to this point, perhaps *Tullies* Epiſtles are as liable to Exceptions as thoſe of St. *Paul.*

*Particular Reaſons of the want of Methods.*

5. Neither are there wanting ſome particular Reaſons, why the Books of the Holy Scriptures do ſometimes ſeem more immethodical than ſome other Books. For theſe *Books* are moſtly wrote in a Language, in which many *words* have a different *ſignification*, which if taken in one ſenſe will make two ſentences all-of-a-piece, and mutually depend upon each other; but if taken in another ſenſe, in which they are ſometimes uſed, will make the ſentence, where they are found, ſeem perfectly to

ſtand by it ſelf, as if it was brought in heedleſly without any manner of deſign.

Another Reaſon why the Scripture does ſometimes look immethodical is this, That oftentimes, in an Hiſtorical or Prophetical Relation, there is of a ſudden a Predictive Excurſion made of the *Meſſias*, which may look at firſt ſight like a careleſs Ramble of Thought; but is really a very Wiſe Forecaſt of the Divine Providence, which does, upon all occaſions, take care to give Men a ſtedfaſt hope of that wonderful Mercy, which in fulneſs of time God Almighty did deſign to afford to Mankind.

At other times, the Method is neglected, not out of heedleſneſs, but out of Juſt and Wiſe Deſigns, and the Holy Ghoſt takes occaſion to confirm ſome important Truth by his Authority, which does not lie directly in the regular tenor of Diſcourſe, but he takes occaſion to remark it by the by; which occaſion not being laid hold of, ſuch a Revelation would have been wanting to God's Church, or would have required a diſtinct Diſcourſe to have revealed it; and by that means would have made the Scriptures too prolix and unſerviceable to the generality of Men.

And

And laſtly, a great deal of the Immethodicalneſs of Scripture, will be taken away by reading it in the Original, for oftentimes the ſtops are not rightly made in our Tranſlations, which ſometimes divide thoſe ſentences which ought to be conjoined, and unite thoſe which ought to be ſeparated; which frequently ſo diſturbs the ſenſe, as makes it look very wild and ſtaring to thoſe who do not obſerve the Propriety and Connexion in the Original. In ſhort, I deſire you would make thoſe allowances to the Holy Scriptures as you do to other Books, for the Antiquity, the greatneſs of their Subject, and other particular Exigencies and Circumſtances, and come to the reading them with a ſerious and devout Mind; and then I am confident you will never much matter their want of Method.

*Phil.* You have got over this matter pretty well, but ſtill the *Obſcurity* of Scripture is, with me, a great Argument againſt the Divinity of it. For who can think that the Holy Ghoſt ſhould ever write after that muddy cloudy rate as moſt of theſe Authors do? The want of Perſpicuity is the moſt intolerable Fault, which any Author can be guilty of: For this deſtroys all the End and Deſign of Writing which is to be underſtood; but he that Writes obſcurely,

whilſt he preaends to inform another of his mind, leaves it unintelligible to him ſtill. Now if God Almighty ſhould act after this Rate, he would put a Banter upon Mankind, as giving out that he had revealed his Will to them by a *Written Word*, when at the ſame time he had wrapped it up in the darkeſt and moſt inacceſſible Clouds. Had God been pleaſed to have made ſuch a Revelation, he would undoubtedly have done it with all imaginable plainneſs, and made it as clear as that Immortal Light he dwells in; nay out of his immenſe Goodneſs to Humane Nature he would have taken the greateſt Care that nothing ſhould be obſcurely expreſſed in a Book of ſuch a momentous Concern, as upon the right underſtanding of which Mens everlaſting Salvation does depend. But how can you reconcile this with the profound Darkneſs of the Scriptural Books, hardly one ſingle Text of which is clearly intelligible? For the Truth of which we need only appeal to the Collection of Criticks, where every Verſe in the Bible has, it may be, half a ſcore Meanings put upon it. Now there can but one of all theſe Senſes be the meaning of the Holy Ghoſt, which is the Direction to Mankind; and among all theſe Interpretations, which ſometimes bid equally fair for it,

who

who can tell which that is? So that upon the whole, here is a Revelation of God's Will to Mankind, to direct himſelf by it, but by the Obſcurity of it, Mankind cannot underſtand it, or be able to diſtinguiſh God Almighty's meaning from the different meanings, it may be, of *Origen* or *Jerom*, *Eraſmus* or *Grotius*.

*Cred.* But I pray hold a little, Sir; for you take a great many things for granted, and paſs over a great many more unconſidered, which you ought not in Juſtice to do.

1. You are too haſty when you ſuppoſe the whole Body of the Scriptures to be univerſally obſcure. For ſome things are wrote as intelligibly as in any *Book* whatſoever. Moſt of the Hiſtorical Parts of Scripture, are wrote in a plain ſimple Style, which the ordinarieſt People do much eaſier underſtand than they would do a Tranſlation of *Thucydides* or *Saluſt*. Indeed it happens, oftentimes, that Commentators, upon theſe Books, differ upon the interpretation of a Word, the end or deſign of an Action, or upon an old Cuſtom, or the like; whilſt the whole Subſtance and Tenor of the Hiſtory remains entire, and in which all the moſt differing Commentators do agree. But

*Hiſtory and Practical Duties plain in Scripture*

if

if this were any Objection againſt Scripture, it would as well hold againſt any old *Greek* or *Latin* Books, upon which Commentators do as often diſagree, as they do upon Texts in the Bible. And yet no body ever ſaid that *Homer* and *Virgil*, or the foremention'd Hiſtorians, were unintelligible Authors, becauſe the Notes that are wrote upon theſe Books are very different from each other? And as for the Doctrinal parts of Scripture, they are far from being obſcure in thoſe Points which it is neceſſary for Men to know in order to their Salvation. The Doctrines of the Incarnation of Jeſus Chriſt, and his Suffering for the Sins of the World, The Doctrines of future Rewards and Puniſhments, and the Neceſſity of Repentance, and a Good Life, in order to Salvation, The common Doctrines of Morality, and thoſe other improved ones of Peaceableneſs, Humility, Self-denial, and Forgiveneſs of Injuries, *&c.* are ſo plainly delivered, and over and over again repeated, that words cannot make any thing more intelligible and more expreſs. Now theſe are the main Things which every Chriſtian ought to be moſt ſolititous about, and therefore it is no great matter if other Doctrines, of leſs conſequence, be not manifeſted in ſo clear a Light: If a Man underſtood

ſtood but only *theſe* things in Scripture, and was not able to tell the meaning of any thing elſe, he would underſtand enough to work out his Salvation by; which is a Mercy, as great as many Chriſtians can reaſonably Deſire, and which anſwers the Principal End of God's revealing his Will to the World.

*Some Sublime things in Scripture cannot be Plain.*

2. And tho' ſome other parts of the Scripture be ſomething more obſcure, yet there is a very good Reaſon to be allowed for it; becauſe the Sublimity of the Subject, treated of in it, will not allow of a greater Clearneſs. No one can reaſonably expect that a *Book of Algebra*, or *Cloſe Metaphyſicks*, ſhould read as glibly as a plain *Hiſtorical Relation*, or a *ſmooth Copy of Verſes*; becauſe every one knows that theſe Abſtruſer Parts of Learning do require deeper *Thoughts*, and cloſer *Application of Mind*, than other Subjects of Literature; and are not to be comprehended by the firſt tranſient view of the Underſtanding. Now we dont ſay, *That*, upon this account, *Algebraical and Metaphyſical Writers are obſcure*; for they may write with all the clearneſs imaginable upon ſo Sublime Subjects, and yet not be underſtood by every unskilful or curſory Reader. And this is frequently the Caſe in the

the *Holy Scriptures*, ſeveral Paſſages which relate to the Doctrine of the *Holy Trinity*, and the *Eternal Generation of the Son of God*, others which ſpeak of the *Nature of Angels*, whoſe Beings and Operations are above the ken of our Underſtandings, others which are *Propheſies of future Events*, whoſe nature it is to be dark and obſcure, and laſtly ſome others which are *Deſcriptions of the other World*, which it is impoſſible, in this imperfect State, that we can have exact Notices of; all theſe Paſſages, though they do look obſcure, yet this is not the fault of the Writer in expreſſing them, but is owing to the Sublime Nature of theſe *Noble* and *Tranſcendant Exiſtences*, and to the *ſhallowneſs of our weak Underſtandings*, which cannot comprehend them better.

*Obſcure Paſſages may be here after Plainer.*

3. There are many other places of Scripture which now look Obſcure, but in proceſs of time, and after ſome great *Revelations* of *God's Providence*, will be perfectly underſtood, and will clear up into a Meridian Light. There are ſeveral Paſſages in the Old Teſtament which are Predictive of the *Meſſias*, and which Men could hardly tell what to make of before the coming of *Chriſt*; but his Life and Sufferings have given demonſtration of the Propheticalneſs of them,

them; this has afforded ſuch a Light to the Underſtanding them, that all their former Obſcurity is vaniſhed and gone. And there is as little doubt to be made but that there are many Texts, both in the Old and New Teſtament, which are now vailed with Obſcurity, but will hereafter be as clear as the day: All thoſe Paſſages which relate to the *future Eſtate of the Church*, to the *Reign of Antichriſt*, to the *Converſion of the Jews*, &c. will then be diſmantled of all their preſent Darkneſs, when theſe wonderful Events ſhall come to paſs; and it is not to be doubted but there are ſeveral other great Revolutions in the *Church* and *Providential Diſpenſations*, which ſhall hereafter happen, that ſhall give Light to many other Places of Scripture, which at preſent we cannot underſtand, or do put a different meaning upon.

*Obſcurity ariſes from Want of exactneſs in Jewiſh Language and Cuſtoms.*

4. It is no fault in the Scriptural Writers that ſome Paſſages of their Books are obſcure; becauſe we are not ſufficiently verſed in the *Hiſtory*, *Cuſtoms*, and the *Language* of the *Jews*, at the time when theſe Books were wrote. Many of theſe Paſſages would be better underſtood if we underſtood the *Hebrew Language* as well as the *Engliſh*; but the *Hebrew* Tongue having been

been a dead Language for many Hundreds of Years, and the Old Teſtament being the only Ancient Book which is wrote in it, it is no wonder that we cannot attain to ſuch a Knowledge of the exact Signification of Words, as when we have a multitude of Books to read in the ſame Tongue. An expreſſion then cannot well happen to be Obſcure upon account of the not underſtanding the true Signification of the Words, becauſe thoſe Words, if they have a dubious Signification in one Book, they are plainly expreſſed in another; a Word that is hard to be underſtood in *Homer*, is very eaſy when compared with the ſame word in a verſe of *Heſiod*, where the Context does more plainly determine the Senſe; which Word would never have been underſtood if there had not been ſome other *Greek* Author extant, who had uſed the ſame. So that the Obſcurity of ſome Places in Scriptures, which you unjuſtly charge upon the confuſedneſs of thoſe Writers thoughts, does many times ariſe for want of Books in the ſame Language to interpret them by. Other Paſſages in Scripture are obſcure, becauſe they refer to ſome old obſolete Cuſtoms among the Jews, that we know nothing of, and therefore it is no wonder that the Senſe in thoſe places is obſcure, when the Metaphors

phors, which are brought to illuſtrate it, cannot poſſibly be underſtood. Suppoſe (for inſtance) that the Art of Gunnery were perfectly loſt, and nothing remaining in Hiſtory of the uſe of Guns; and ſuppoſe that one was to read an *Engliſh* Book, in which a Man is ſaid *to make a falſe Fire*, that is to be balked in an Enterprize, or to attempt a matter unſucceſsfully; I ſay it would be almoſt impoſſible, or at leaſt very difficult to find out, that this was the meaning of that Expreſſion, if there had been no Traces left of the uſe of Guns in the Age wherein ſuch a Book was wrote. Other places are Obſcure, becauſe they allude to ſome remarkable Matters of Fact, which were well known in the Writers Age, but are not recorded in the Jewiſh Hiſtory, which we now read, and therefore, upon this account, we may very reaſonably pardon the Obſcurity of them, unleſs you think the Scriptural Writers were obliged to write Comments upon themſelves, and to explain, as they go on, all their own Metaphors and Alluſions. Now whereas theſe Circumſtances are more or leſs incident to all Antient Writers whatſoever; and you do not uſually charge the Obſcurity, which ariſes from them, as a Fault upon them; I cannot ſee with what Face of Juſtice you

can

can do this upon the Sacred Pen-Men, many of which are the Antienteſt Writers in the World; who beſides wrote in a Tongue in which there is ſo little extant, and in Ages of which there are remaining ſo very few Memoirs.

*Reaſonableneſs of ſome Places being Obſcure.*

5. But after all, the Obſcurity of ſome places in the Scriptures, is ſo far from being a Fault, that it is a peculiar Excellency in them, and an Inſtance of the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, in ordering them to be compoſed after that manner. It is highly requiſite that the Prophetical parts of Scripture ſhould be ſomewhat Obſcure, and ſhould be plainly intelligible only after the Completion; leaſt, if they were before hand underſtood, they might either ſeem to bear hard upon the Freedom of Man's Will, or put God Almighty upon new Meaſures in his Providential Diſpenſations; or leaſt the happy Predictions ſhould elate Men with too much Joy and Preſumption, and the Calamitous Ones depreſs them with a too deſponding a Fear, both which are not ſo reconcilable with the Divine Methods in Governing the World. It is not without manifeſt Wiſdom deſigned, that ſome Paſſages of Scripture ſhould be very Difficult and Obſcure, to raiſe in Men a Sacred Awe and

and Veneration for theſe Books, which would be more generally wanting in Men, if they were wrote with the bright Perſpicuity of other common Authors: By this there is ſuch a ſort of Devotional Reſpect raiſed within us, as there is by the gloomineſs of an Antient Church, which is not to be effected by the pleaſant lightſomneſs of other Buildings. By this Obſcurity, likewiſe, God Almighty teaches us Humility, and puts us in miud of the ſhallowneſs of our finite Underſtandings, and ſhews us that it is owing to his Good Will and Pleaſure, that we have any knowledge at all of Divine Truths, that he reveals to us juſt as much as he pleaſes, and at his will veils over the reſt with Darkneſs. By the ſame Difficulties he gives us an opportunity of Exerciſing our Deligence in theſe Sacred Matters, for otherwiſe Men would be more Lazy in the Buſineſs of their Salvation, nor would the Divine Truths be ſo ſtrongly imprinted upon their minds, as when ſome of them, with ſo much Difficulty and Study, are to be found out in the Scriptures.

*Phil.* But methinks, *Credentius*, it is no light Objection againſt the Scriptural Books, that they are pregnant with ſo many impertinent Paſſages, as render them Nautions to every one who has a ny true taſt of the Ex-

cellency of Style. It always shews the Prudence of a Writer, when he avoids every thing that is Trivial in an Argument, or a Relation, and lets no thought pass but what is just and proper to the Business: but the Scriptural Writers give themselves up to an extravagant looseness; they generally dwell long upon matters very insignificant, and lightly slip over the most important. One can hardly have patience with the Writer of the *Pentateuch*; when he makes such a tedious Dialoguing between *Abraham* and his Servants, *Joseph* and his Brethren, and the like; and passes over so many greater Occurrences of those early Times, which were much more proper to be recorded. Besides, the other parts of the Bible are full of so many trivial Histories, Questions, Answers, and Remarks, that one may very well conclude; that it is so far from being a Collection of Necessary and Important Truths indited by God Almighty; that an impartial Reader cannot guess it to be the Work of Wise and Prudent Men. For *Herodotus* and *Thucydides*, *Salust* and *Livy*, who were assisted only by their own Natural Parts, do never fall into such gross Faults and Absurdities. And who can think, that God Almighty should act according to the Rules of such an Adorable Wisdom in the Com-

Compoſition of the Body of every Plant and Animal, as to make nothing ſuperfluous in their whole Contexture; and yet, in the Book, which was indited for the Salvation of Mens Souls, he ſhould ſuffer ſo great a Part of it to be Trivial and Forreign to the Purpoſe?

*Cred.* 1. And who can think that you ſhould be able to paſs a juſt Judgment upon every Paſſage in Scripture, ſo as truly to pronounce that only ſuch Things are wrote with Prudence and Deſign, and others impertinently? It requires a conſiderable Skill in Anatomy to be able to give an account of the true Uſe of every Muſcle in the Body, and whilſt you are not, it may be, very exact in that Art it will not become you, Dogmatically to aſſert; that any one of thoſe Muſcles has no Uſe, becauſe you do not underſtand it. I do not believe, that you have laid out more time upon the Study of *Theology* than *Anatomy*; and therefore you ſhould not pronounce any Book or Paſſage of Scripture, Trivial or Uſeleſs, before you have ſufficiently examined it. Every Part of Scripture is not Trivial, that does not immediately conduce to the Salvation of Mens Souls; any more than any Part of the Body can be

*The meaneſt Parts of Scripture Neceſſary to the perfection of the whole*

ſaid to be Uſeleſs, which does not contribute to our Vital Subſiſtence. A Man's Body may live and perform the moſt Principle Operations of Life without Hair or Nails, without Ten Fingers and Two Eyes, but yet it will not be ſo Perfect and Beautiful as with them, nor ſo agreeable to the conſummate Art and Wiſdom of our *Divine Creator*. And ſo there is no doubt, but that Men *might be ſaved* without the Book of *Ruth*, or the Hiſtory of *Iſaac* and *Rebecca*, or *Joſeph*'s Captivity; but then it does not from hence follow, that therefore theſe *Relations* are perfectly Uſeleſs and Trivial. They would be freed from this Exception, if they were only to be looked upon as ſome remarkable *Memoirs* of the *Jewiſh Hiſtory*, and as giving ſome account of the Lives of very conſiderable Perſonages of that Nation. But when we conſider together the whole Scheme of *God*'s *Providential Diſpenſation* in ſending the *Meſſias* into the World, and the *Methods* he was pleaſed to take in preparing the way for it; how he firſt ſeparated one Man's Family from his Idolatrous Relations and Countrymen, and made his Off-ſpring to be the Standard of *true Religions Worſhip* for many Ages, and from whoſe Loins this deſigned *Saviour*

*The Relation of the Family Affairs of the Patriarchs not trivial.*

*Saviour of the World* was to come; I ſay when we conſider this, it is but reaſonable to ſuppoſe that ſome particular Account ſhould be given of the Origen of this extraordinary Family, by which all the World has received ſuch a Wonderful Benefit in the Birth of Jeſus Chriſt, neither would the Harmonious Correſpondence of *God's Providence* have been ſo remarkably diſplay'd, if the wonderful *Succeſſes* and *Bleſſings* upon that *Family* and *Houſe*; from which Chriſt deſcended, had not been recorded. So that what you Witts are wont to make ſport with, as a few ſimple and homely Family Stories, is in reality the Nobleſt and moſt Uſeful Hiſtory in the World; and which the celebrated *Relations*, of your *Themiſtocles*'s *Cæſars* and *Cleopatras*, are but poor ſtuff in compariſon of. For what can be ſo Noble and ſo Worthy of *Hiſtorical Relation*, as the Origin and Succeſs of that Family, from whence aroſe the greateſt *Perſon* that ever the World ſaw, and the greateſt *Benefactor* that Mankind ever had?

2. You ſhould conſider further, that the *Holy Scriptures* are wrote in a plain and ſimple Style, accommodated to the Uſe of the Vul-

*The Scriptural Writers do not pretend to the Heathen Exactneſs of Style.*

gar, and many things in it wrote according to their way of ſpeaking; ſo that what you Gentlemen, who have ſtudied for the exact and elaborate Style, may call Trivial, God Almighty does think to be wiſely contrived for the Capacities of ordinary People, who may be beſt edified thereby. There is no doubt to be made, but if the Holy Ghoſt had deſigned to write the Bible for the pleaſure of a Court, or to ſuit the Ears of Curious Scholars, he would have compoſed ſome parts of it in a more Exact and Caſtigated Style; but when he deſigned by it the Univerſal Good of Mankind, he has thought it more adviſable to conſult the *Edification of Poor Mens Souls*, than to avoid the Cenſure of ſome of you Criticks.

*Exact writing of Hiſtory a Grecian Art.*

3. You ſhould take notice further, That *that* Exact way of Writing *Hiſtory*, which you ſo much admire in the Antient *Heathens*, and undervalue the *Bible* for not coming up to, was a *Qualification* which Men of an *Eaſtern Education* muſt needs be Strangers to. *Writing of Hiſtory* was an Art or Exerciſe which the *Grecians* plaid Prizes and Trials of Skill for at their *Olympick*, and other Games; and upon this account arrived to the niceſt *Perfection* in. Here they learned to make their *feigned Speeches*, and

and *Ethopœia's*, their *elaborate Deſcriptions*, their *curious Epiphonemata* and *Turns of Reflexion* upon the Matters they relate, and to throw out every thing from the Relation, but what was Fine and Pompous, and had an Air of Majeſty and Grandure in it. Now I very much queſtion whether or no Hiſtory was at all better'd by this gaudy trimming and whether the dry writing of Annals and Matters of Fact in their pure Natural Simplicity does not beſt conduce towards the End of Hiſtory, *viz.* To inform Men of the Truth of Matters of Fact; which is better diſcovered in a plain and naked Repreſentation, than under ſo much Paint and Varniſh as your celebrated Heathen Hiſtorians deliver it in. But be this as it will; the Jewiſh Hiſtorians are not at all to blame for not being perfect in all the Niceties of the *Greek* Schools, where your admir'd Rules of Hiſtory were only taught; or however *Moſes*, and thoſe other Ancient Writers of the Hebrew Memoirs, may very well be excuſed for not purſuing thoſe Methods in Writing Hiſtory, which were invented (long after their time) by *Herodotus* and *Thucydides*.

*What may seem impertinant is sometimes Typical.*

4. You should also observe, That what you call Impertinent and Trivial in the Relation is sometimes inserted there by the wisest Forecast and Design, to be either a Type or a Prophesy of something remarkable under the Gospel. Thus many things about *Abraham* and *Sarah*, the Sacrifice of *Isaac*, the Captivity and Exaltation of *Joseph*, &c. are so particularly related, because God designed these Occurrences to be shadows of many things which happened afterwards in the Church of Christ, of his *Incarnation*, his *Dying for the Sins of the World*, and his *Resurrection* and *Ascension*; which are in a wonderful Similitude prefigured in those Antient Matters of Fact. So that if the Historian had forborn the Relation of these Circumstances, Christianity has wanted some Considerable Evidences of its Truth; and the Wise Scheme of God's Providence, in the Salvation of the World, had not been so amply display'd.

*Sometimes Prophetical.*

5. Other times you may take that for an impertinent Relation or Trivial Digression, which is only a Prophetick Excursion of the Kingdom of Christ. You may fondly think that the inspired Writer ought to go on with the Secular Matter in the same Tract he began

began with; whilſt the Holy Ghoſt does prudently turn him off to a new ſeries of Thought, and puts him upon predicting the glad Tidings of the *Goſpel*. Now this is ſo far from being *Impertinent* and *Trivial*, that it is the moſt important Subject that inſpired Writers can employ their Thoughts upon, and nothing can be ſo proper and agreeable to the great Deſign of *Writing the revealed World*.

6. And if there be any other Particulars which are not ſo conformable to the general Deſign of the *Hiſtory* or *Argument* in Scripture, they are added either for the *Confutation* of ſome *Hereſy* which the *Holy Ghoſt* did foreſee in future Times would ariſe; or for the *Confirmation* of ſome *Truth*, which there would not be occaſion in another place of Scripture to juſtify; or to give an account of *Cuſtom* in former Ages, which would be *advantageous* for the *Church of God* in future times to know.

*Or brought into Confute Hereſies, &c.*

*Phil.* This is pretty plauſible, I confeſs. But how can you juſtify the *Scriptural Writers* from that *Crambe Repetita*, thoſe nauſeous *Repetitions* of the ſame thing they are every where guilty of? If one was to take to pieces the whole *Book of Pſalms*, and ſtrip it of its *Tautological Expreſſions*, one might reduce

reduce it, for ought I know, to a few lines. All the *Major* and *Minor Prophets* run just in the same note, only denouncing temporal Judgments against the sinful Jews; and not one of them advances one step further. The *Sermons of Christ* are but the same thing over and over, and all of them reduceable to Two Words, *Faith* and *Repentance*. And so as for the *Apostolick Epistles*, they are but just the same Lecture coldly repeated, only now and then a word intermixed for the *Abolition* of the *Jewish Ceremonies*, after Christianity had set up for it self *first at Antioch*.

*Cred.* 1. But I should think, *Philologus*, that this sorry kind of Reasoning or Banter, or what you please to call it, should be full as Nauseous to the Nice Gentlemen of your way, as the Scripture Repetitions. Now supposing we should allow your Charge, *That Repetitions are more frequent in the Bible than in any other Book*. And is not there very good reason for this? Were the *Holy Scriptures* all wrote by one Man, or at one time? And what Fault or Undecency is it that two *Prophets* or *Apostles* should say the same Things, any more than that the same History should be wrote by *Arrian* and *Curtius*, or the same Arguments

*Repetitions owing to the different Authors who wrote the Scriptures.*

ments made uſe of by *Ariſtotle* and *Cicero*? The Bible is not properly one Book but a Collection of Inſpired Authors, in which it is to be expected that the ſame things ſhould be over again repeated, as we do in a Collection or Body of the *Greek* or *Roman* Hiſtorians.

*Practical Duties ought to be repeated to inculcate them in others minds.*

2. But what if ſeveral things be reiterated and that by the ſame Authors? They are chiefly Practical Duties, which can never be too ſufficiently inculcated. Repentance and a Good Life are things which can never be talked to us too often; for as to theſe Matters Men do not want information, but *Memento's* and *Admonitions*; and therefore upon this Account you do very ill to find fault with the ſacred Writings, when you ſhould rather admire the Goodneſs of Almighty God, in condeſcending ſo graciouſly to our Infirmities, that in every Page almoſt of his *Holy Word*. He affords us Inſtructions and Exhortations to theſe Great and Momentous *Duties*, which we are ſo unhappily liable to fail in.

*Some things diverſly urged to ſuit with Mens Inclinations.*

3. Other *Repetitions* there are in Scripture, which the *Holy Ghoſt* has with very great Wiſdom made, thereby to ſuit his

Exhor-

Exhortations to the ſeveral Intereſts, Capacities and Inclinations of Men. Some places of Scripture are adapted to work upon Mens *Fears*, and others upon their Love; ſome exhort Men to the *Ordinance of God's Laws*, by Arguments drawn from his *Juſtice* by repreſenting him a *Jealous* and a *Terrible God*; others perſwade the ſame from his *Goodneſs* and *Mercy*, beſpeaking him to be the *Lord, kind and merciful, and long-ſuffering, the Father of Mercies, and the God of all Comfort.* In ſome Men *Piety* and *Devotion* is raiſed by contemplating the *Power* and *Wiſdom* of *God*, in his *Creatton* and *Providence*, painted with the moſt noble ſtrains of Eloquence in the Book of *Job* and the *Pſalms*; others are more moved by the repeeſentation of his *Love to Mankind*, in ſending his Son, which St. *John* ſo much dwells upon. Some places exhort Men to be good from the *Reward*, others from the *Beauty of Vertue*; ſome exhibit the Danger, ſome the Turpitude, and others the Folly of Sin. One Text commends Sobriety from it Temporal, another from it Eternal Recompence; one repeats Pride as contemptible to Men, others as hateful to God; and though there are mrny Texts which exhort to Charity, yet they do it upon diſtinct Grounds, ſome urging our Gratitude to a Gracious

Gracious God, ſome the *Love of a ſuffering Saviour*, ſome pleading our own Wants and natural Tenderneſs and Compaſſion, others our indiſpenſable Duty, and others our Intereſt. Now you may call this *Nauſeous Repetition*, or what other ill Name you pleaſe, but in reality the Wiſdom of God is as beautifully diſplayed in this as in the other Parts of his Providence. The Creation it ſelf is not more wiſely and more curiouſly adorned by all the wonderful Variety of Plants and Animals, than the Scriptures are delightſomely furniſhed with all poſſible variety of Arguments for a Good Life, and the Love of God.

*Heathen Authors as much ſubject to Repetition.*

4. But ſince you talk of *Nauſeous Repetition*, I pray, good Sir, how will you be able to clear your beloved Heathen Moraliſts from this Imputation. *Seneca* is moſt eminently Notorious for this fault: He tumbles and toſſes about one ſingle Thought for a page or two together; he feeds his Reader with nothing but Whipt Cream, with a very little Senſe frothed out into a multitude of words. So that if he does not repeat the ſame words, he repeats the ſame ſenſe over and over with a Vengeance. And if you would but ſtrip your Divine *Plato* too of all his unintelligble Rent; and turn all

all his Rhetorical Flights into Common Senſe, you will find but a very little room taken up by it. It may be, I grant, that *Cicero* and *Plutarch*, and ſome others of them, write more cloſely, and argue more juſtly; yet even they have as much of the *Crambe Repetita* as their Neighbours. Whilſt you may obſerve in the Holy Scripture a great Variety of Arguments for a good Life, ſome drawn from a Temporal, others from an Eternal Reward; from the Fear, from the Love of God, from the Hopes of Heaven, from the Fears of Hell, from the Gratitude to our Saviour; from the Senſe of our Conſciences, and the Dignity of our Chriſtian Calling; you can ſee nothing like this Variety in thoſe Moraliſts, they go backwards and forwards with their *Honeſtum* and *Decorum*, and ſo on to the end oftentimes of a long Treatiſe.

*Scripture vindicated from this Imputation.*

5, As to what you reflect upon, the Writings of the Prophets and Apoſtles, and the Sermons of our Bleſſed Lord himſelf; the Calumny is perfectly Groundleſs. For there is no ſuch Nauſeous Repetition in the Prophetical Writings as you pretend. Indeed there are in all of them many of the ſame general Arguments againſt Sin, drawn from the Anger and Vengeance of

of God, who was provoked by the Sins of the Jews; which is no more than could be expected; for the Prophets were the Preachers of thoſe Times, who were ſet up by God to warn men againſt their Sins; and therefore all thoſe Prophets, in their reſpective Ages, make uſe of the moſt proper and moſt popular Arguments, to dehort them from their wicked Courſes. But theſe Arguments are urged in as different a manner as can be, unleſs you would have each Prophet to invent New Heads of Divinity to preach upon. When Judgments are denounced, they are ſometimes againſt the *People*, ſometimes againſt the *Prieſts*, and othertimes againſt the *Kings*: At one time againſt *Judah* or *Iſrael*, another time againſt *Edom* or *Ægypt*. One Propheſy reprehends them for their *Pride*, another for their *Idolatry*, and another for their *Profanation of the Sabbath*. Sometimes they are threatened with *War*, ſometimes with *Peſtilence*, other times with *Scarcity*, and ſometimes with *want of Prophets*, or *the Famine of the Word*, Amos 8. 11. One Propheſy gives them the Joyful News of *a Reſtauration from their Captivity*, another of their *Redemption by the Meſſias*, and others do foretel the *Perſon*, the *Sufferings*, the *Kingdom* and *Exaltation* *The Prophets.*

of

*of Christ.* One is weeping over the Old *Jerusalem*, another is ravished with the Thoughts of the New. In some places the Jews are upbraided for their Folly in trusting in an Arm of Flesh, and in older for their Sottishness in worshipping Images. Now methinks it should carry with it an Air of too much confidence, to assert that the Prophets do all say the same thing, over and over, when there is such a wonderful Variety of fresh matter in them as is hardly to be paralled elsewhere.

*Christ and his Apostles.*

But 'tis a Jest of an Argument, when you object against our Saviour's Sermons, that he preached nothing but Faith and Repentance. And what if he did not? there would have been fresh matter enough in those two great Heads of the Gospel to have spoke upon; for all the Gospel Graces are reduced to these. Now would it not be a notable Objection, rais'd against *Aristotle*, to say there is nothing but *Substance* and *Accident* in all his Books; when 'tis known that the Philosopher himself would have willingly owned the Charge, he himself having divided every thing in Nature into these Grand Branches? But our Saviour (as likewise his Apostles) did not dwell altogether upon these Graces in general, he runs thro' all the particular Duties

Duties of *Morality*, and exactly ſtates them according to the meaſures of the beſt and moſt exalted *Reaſon*. And give me leave further to ſay, that in the ſhort compaſs of our Saviour's Sermon upon the Mount, *there is couched more good Matter and more ſolid Truth, than in all your Greek and Latin Philoſophers put together*. And you will find proportionably the like in the Epiſtles of the Apoſtles, if you will vouchſafe to read them as carefully as you ſhould.

*Phil.* But ſtill, *Credentius*, I want that deſirable thing call'd *good Reaſoning* in all parts of the Scripture. When I read a piece of *Cicero*'s Morality, I cannot but be in Love with the Duties he recommends; he makes them to be ſo agreeable to my Reaſon, ſo conformable to my Nature, or my State and Condition in the World, that methinks I am charmed into the Practice of them, whether I will or no. He ſhews me ſo much beautiful *Order* and *Harmony*, and agreeableneſs with the Laws of Nature in every Vertue; ſuch an ugly unproportionableneſs in Vice, ſuch an incongruity with and diſturbance to Nature; as makes, in the eyes of every Rational Man, the one to look lovely and delightful, and the other monſtrous and abominable. But the Scriptural Writers are not Maſters of this noble

*Qualification*, they honestly enough tell Men what they should do, but give them no reason for it; and so, when Men have their Passions and their Interests on their side, they think they have reason enough against it. But, however, though they should be really convinced of their Duty by this; yet bare Authority can never have that influence upon Mens Lives, as a Rational Persuasion.

*Cred.* I think, *Philologus*, I shall never be able to wean you from this *Heathen Rationality*, as if no *Morality* was to be taught out of the *Mode of the Antient Philosophers*. Indeed the Scriptural Writers do not make use of the exact *Philosophick Phraseology*, they are Strangers to their Cant of *Summum Bonum*, *Honestum*, *Turpe*, &c. But when they teach *Moral Duties*, they argue altogether as justly, and upon more solid Principles, than the other. Are not the Arguments, which *Moses* uses, to engage the Jews to a compliance with the *Laws* which God enjoyned them, drawn from the Obligation they owed him from His Creation of them, from his Delivering them from Bondage, and making them his chosen People; from the Prosperity which their Obedience would procure, and their certain Calamities which their

*Scriptures make use of Rational Argumentation.*

their Diſobedience would entail upon them; are not theſe as cogent Arguments to perſuade a Nation to comply with thoſe wholſome Laws, as to have talked to them of the *Bravery of Vertue*, and the *Deformity of Vice?* Are not the Arguments, which the *Prophets* uſe, more rationally adapted to make the People leave their Sins, when they denounce ſuch terrible Judgments againſt them, and tax them with ſuch vile Ingratitude, ſuch Brutiſh Stupid Idolatry, and ſuch other rouſing *Motives to Repentance*; than if, in the *Philoſophical* Way, they had read them only ſome cold flat Lectures of the *Happy Life*, and the Beatitude of the *Philoſophical Vertue?* Are not our Saviour's Parables all noble Reaſonings, which by a peculiar Excellency, in a ſhort Similitude, do better oftentimes ſtate all the particular Caſes of a Moral Duty than they were done in whole Treatiſes, which the *Philoſophers* had wrote on them before? All the *Philoſophick Diſquiſitions* in the World, are not comparable to that one *Reaſon* of our Saviour, *What ſhall it profit a Man to gain the whole World and loſe his own Soul?* That ſingle Precept of our bleſſed Lord, *Whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do unto you, that ſhall ye do unto them*, is ſuch a Noble Inſtance of the trueſt and moſt exalted Reaſoning, as

no *Philoſophy* but the Chriſtian can boaſt of, and the Heathens in latter Ages were forced to mend theirs by it. What can be more genuine *Reaſoning*, than thoſe Reflexions our *Saviour* made upon the *Phariſaical Doctrines*, and the Improvements he gave to *Morality*? What can be more Rational than St. *Paul*'s ſtate of the Caſe about the *Obſervation* of *Jewiſh Ceremonies*, that of *Juſtification by Works*; and the Caſe of the *Idolothyta*, and the *Inceſtuous Perſon*? Nay, dip where you will in the Bible, and ſee if you do not every where find ſuch powerful Arguments againſt a Wicked Life, and ſuch mighty Encouragements to Holineſs, that nothing but an obdurate Heart, an inveterate Prejudice and poiſon'd Principles can ſtand Proof againſt. In ſhort, there is as much, and much better *Reaſoning* in the *Scriptures* than in other Books; which is viſible enough to all who will make Allowances for the Eaſtern Way of *Expreſſion* and *Argumentation*; and I dont find that the *Greek* and *Latin* Books exceed them in any thing but in *Declamatory Sentences*, and a ſpruce ſet of *Philoſophick Phraſes*.

*Though they have not that need of it as other Books.*

But though the *Holy Scriptures* were as deſtitute of *Reaſoning*, as you pretend, yet the *Authority* of God Almighty, which they are grounded

grounded upon, is inſtead of a Thouſand *Arguments* and *Reaſonings*. For all Reaſoning whatſoever upon *Moral Duties* does center here; and whatſoever I conclude by Reaſon morally to oblige, comes but at laſt to this, that God has ordered it ſo. For inſtance, my Reaſon traces it out, that *Juſtice* is a Duty, becauſe Man, which is naturally ordained for Society, cannot live without it, and becauſe the World is ſo contrived, that if this was laid aſide, it would be all Tumult and Confuſion; therefore I conclude that God, in framing the World, deſigned that Men ſhould practice this Vertue of Juſtice, without which there would be no tolerable living in the World. Now after all this trouble of Thinking and laying my Thoughts together, I gain only to know thus much, That God has order'd me to be *Juſt in my Dealings*, which by God's Word I learn at one view, and which I think is none of the leaſt Advantages. And therefore, if the Scripture had not in any place otherwiſe than commanded us our Duty, it was ſufficient to give us a full Perſuaſion of it; and that by a ſhorter and better Method, as grounding it immediately upon the *Authority* of God, which all *Rational Deductions* muſt come up to at laſt, though by a long round-about Courſe.

*Phil.* I have one thing more to except against upon this Head, and that is, *That I mightily stumble at the many Contradictions which are found in Scripture.* It is intolerable in a meer Human Writer to make a slip of this Nature; because it argues not only a Supine Incogitancy, but a Want of Truth: Then how can we bear with these Faults in those *Books*, which you pretend were wrote by the Assistance of the *Holy Ghost?* How is such a palpable Contradiction to be born with as is between the two Evangelists, when one says that the Women came to the Sepulchre *when it was yet dark*, Joh. 20. 1. Another says it was ανατλάντος ἡλίου, when the Sun *had been some time up?* In one place the Writer of the Acts of the Apostles says, *that the Men who were with St.* Paul *heard the voice but seeing no man*, Acts 9. 7. in another place that *they heard not the voice of him that speak*, Acts 22. 9. And so St. *Stephen*, in the same History, mistakes the time of the *Ægyptian* Bondage for *Four Hundred* Years, which did not exceed, according to the Scripture account, above *Two Hundred and Fifteen.* To say nothing of the diverse mistaken Quotations out of the *Old Testament* in the *New*, and the very different Relations of the several Evangelists, of the *Actions* and *Sermons* of Christ. All which things do manifestly

nifeſtly evince the great Careleſneſs and Imbecility, if not the Inſincerity of theſe Writers; or however they do ſhew that God Almighty could have no hand in the Compoſure of thoſe Books in which there are ſuch frequent Inſtances of Human Frailties and Miſtakes.

*Cred.* But by your leave, Sir, I think you run away with matters a little too faſt, without that due conſideration of them that they deſerve; which I fancy you will be convinced of, if you will give your ſelf time more deliberately to think of them than I believe you have hitherto done.

1. For you ſhould conſider that tho' there poſſibly were ſome little Contradictions in Scripture, yet theſe are not in any Material Points that do at all affect the Main of Religion; and therefore you ſhould from thence take notice, that it is no very wiſe Undertaking to make uſe of ſuch an Argument againſt Chriſtianity, which if granted, would do it no manner of Diskindneſs. Indeed, if you could prove that one part of the Scripture ſaid, *that Jeſus Chriſt was born of a Virgin*, and another after the *ordinary manner of Generation*; if one Evangeliſt ſhould ſay, *that he aroſe from the dead*, and another, *that he lies buried in ſuch*

*No Contradiction in a material point in Scripture.*

*a place*; this would be an objection, which the Infidels might make ſome uſe of; becauſe it would overthrow the very foundation of Chriſtianity, when it ſhould be ſhewn that the Hiſtory of the Principal Articles of it were uncertain. But for ſuch little ſort of Verbal Contradictions, as you hint at, ſome ſmall interfering in Chronology and Account of time; this ſhould methinks break no ſquares in any Writing whatſoever; for there were never two Authors who have wrote upon the ſame Matters of Fact, but have differ'd from one another in many points of this nature. And it ſhews that you are very hard put to it to piqueer againſt Scripture, to find fault with it for ſuch things, which neither you, nor any body elſe, would blame in another Book.

*Some ſlight Contradictions proof of the Genuineſs of Scripture.*

2. You ſhould take notice that theſe little ſeeming Contradictions are ſo far from invalidating the Authority of the Holy Scriptures, that they do in a great meaſure contribute to ſupport it. If the Scriptures had been wrote by a Cabal of Men, who had deſigned to have impoſed upon the World, they would moſt undoubtedly have uſed all Circumſpection and Caution, that nothing like a Contradiction

tradiction ſhould have appeared in their diverſe Relations, but they would have contrived them to have been as like to one another as two Tallies are. For nothing is wont to be ſo exact as a ſtudied Cheat. And therefore it is a great *Argument* of the *Veracity* of theſe Writers, that they agree with one another ſo uniformly in all principal Points, and neglect an exactneſs in ſome little *Punctillio's*, which nothing but a Confederacy could have made them agree upon.

*All ſeeming Contradictions ſatisfactorily ſolved,*

3. And even theſe ſmall Difficulties which you call *Contradictions*, are very ſatisfactorily ſolved by *Chriſtian* Writers, if you will but give your ſelf the pains to conſult them; either by ſhewing the different Acceptation of the Words or Expreſſions in the ſeemingly interfering Places, by ſettling the *Chronological Accounts*, by comparing them with other parts of Scripture, that have an Analogy with them, or by other *good Rules* of *Interpretation* and *Criticiſm*; which are wont to be inexceptionable in the Explication of all other Authors.

4. And

*There could not but be such seeming Contradictions arising from Ancient Customs.*

4. And it is but reasonable to suppose that there should be some of these seeming *Contradictions*, if we consider the different Customs and Ways of Speaking, which were in use in those former Ages, and which are now forgot; which might determine the expressions of Scripture to a certain Sense, which for our Ignorance of them we cannot now so conveniently put upon them: So that some expressions which are now seemingly repugnant, might be more easily reconciled, if we were conscious of those Usages, to which one of them might probably *Metaphorically* allude.

*Hebrew Tongue.*

Besides, we know the *Hebrew Tongue* is a very narrow Language, and one Word has sometimes a great many significations, which, being put into *Greek*, as in the *New Testament*, is supposed to retain all those significations still; so that when two Places are seemingly Contradictory, they may frequently be made to agree, by giving the same word one of its significations in the first place, and another of them in its second. This does commonly enough happen in the *Greek* and *Latin*, and particularly in our own Language; and if we should be so peevishly

peeviſhly Critical, as ſome Men are upon the Bible, there is hardly one Book whatſoever wrote, but ſome ſuch Verbal Contradictions may be picked up out of it.

*Chronology.*

Add to this, that Accounts of Time are ſo difficult to be ſtated, the ſupernumerary Months of Kings Reigns do often puzzle the General *Computations*, the Numeral Figures are ſo lyable to be miſtaken, and the *Jewiſh* years do not exactly quadrate with the *Grecian*, either as to their Length or their Beginning; that it is no wonder that in the midſt of theſe Difficulties, there are to be found many ſeeming Repugnancies in the Chronology of Scripture. But this is no more than is oftentimes to be found in *Modern Hiſtories*; and yet we do not pretend to take away the Credit of them upon this account.

5. As for thoſe Inſtances of *Contradictions*, you have urged out of the Holy Scripture, give me leave to ſay, they are very weak and trivial Objections, and have been anſwered over and over.

*Pretended Contradiction about the time of Chriſt his Reſurrection ſolved.*

For as for your Inſtance out of the Evangeliſts about our Saviour's Reſurrection, there is no manner of *Contradiction* in them; the Places agreeing as exactly as any two Authors

which

which they relate the same thing are used to do. St. *Mark* says they came to the Sepulchre ἀνατείλαντος ἡλίου, when the Sun was rising; for that signifies no more than ἀνατέλλοντος. For in the New Testament oftentimes the First Aorist is used for the present Tense, as *Mat.* 17. 7. ἐγέρθητε, *Arise ye*: And *ver.* 16. *They could not* θεραπεῦσαι, *heal him*: And *v.* 17. Ἀποκριθείς *answering*. So that here the ἀνατείλαντος ἡλίου, *the Sun rising* is answerable to the λίαν πρωΐ, very early, mentioned before in this Evangelist, and in St. *Matthew*. But what does St. *John* say in Contradiction to this? He relates their coming to the Sepulchre *when it was yet dark*. That is, it was not yet perfectly light; which is not at all inconsistent with the expression, *the Sun being now rising*. For though we commonly call the Sun's rising that time when some Parts of it are above the Horizon; yet it is not at all improper to allow that expression to the first Crepusculum, all that time wherein the Sun begins to shew any Light, tho' mixed with a considerable degree of Darkness.

*That about hearing the* Voice *in Saint* Paul's *Conversion.*

As for the other Instance in the *History of St.* Paul's *Conversion*. In one place, the Men that were with St. *Paul* (*Acts* 9. 5.) are said to *hear a Voice*, that

that is a loud inarticulate ſound of the *Bath Col*, or the Thundering Noiſe which came from Heaven, (for the Jews call Thunder by the name of Voice, and the Septuagint, and other Helleniſtical Jews, Tranſlate it by φωνὴ, *Exod.* 19. 16. *Luke* 9. 35. *Rev.* 10. 3.) and in the other place they are ſaid *not to hear the Voice of him that ſpeak*, Acts 22. 9. that is not in Nature of an Human Articulate Speech, ſo as to underſtand what was ſaid.

And ſo likewiſe that other *Chronological Objection*, you urge concerning the Children of *Iſraels* ſtay in *Ægypt*, this is not ſuch a terrible Contradiction in Scripture as you are apt to imagine. For ſuppoſing that the Abode of the *Iſraelites* in that Country were juſt 215 Years as you lay down, I do not ſee any place in Scripture which does contradict it ſo as to make it Four hundred Years. St. *Luke* in the ninth of the *Acts* does no more than quote the Promiſe which God made to *Abraham*, as is recorded, *Gen.* 15. 13. That *his Poſterity ſhould be Strangers or Sojourners in a Land which was not their own, and ſhould ſerve the Inhabitants thereof, who ſhould afflict them for Four Hundred Years*. So that all the queſtion is, whether this Propheſy refer only to the

*That about the time of the* Iſraelites *ſtay in* Ægypt.

the Continuance of the *Iſraelites* in *Ægypt*, who 'tis plain did not ſtay there ſo long. And I think it may be *ſufficiently* evinced, that the Propheſy does not relate only to this, but to the ſojourning of all the Patriarchs in *Canaan* as well as *Ægypt*; from the time of the Promiſe God made to *Abraham* to the *Iſraelites* Exit. Indeed (*Exod.* 12. 4.) it is ſaid, *that the time of the* Iſraelites *ſojourning in* Ægypt *was Four hundred and thirty years*, but this muſt be underſtood only of the greater and moſt remarkable Time of the ſojourning of that Family, if the Hebrew reading be to be allow'd. But the Septuagint have another reading, which is *the time of the Iſraelites ſojourning*, ἐν Αιγύπτῳ καὶ ἐν τῇ γῇ Χαναάν in *Ægypt*, and in the Land of *Canaan was* 430 *years*. And the *Samaritan* Copy reads the ſame. Where by the way you muſt obſerve that St. *Luke*, whom you do chiefly by this Objection attack, did make uſe of the LXX. Tranſlation, appears by his many Quotations out of it in this Book of the *Acts* of the *Apoſtles*. And you may further obſerve that it was generally the Opinion of the Jews who lived about the Apoſtles time, that this 430 years here mentioned, was to be reckon'd from the *Promiſe* made to *Abraham*. For unleſs this was a Thing generally concluded upon, the Apoſtle,

ſtle, St. *Paul*, could not found an Argument upon it, as he does; ſuppoſing this as an indubitable and uncontroverted Truth. *But this I ſay that the Covenant confirmed before by God in reſpect of Chriſt, the Law* (which began after 430 Years) *could not make void, ſo as to diſanul the Promiſe.* So that from hence it is plain, that it was a Truth generally receiv'd at that time, that there were but 430 Years between the Promiſe made to *Abraham*, and the giving of the Law; and therefore that they did not think that the Scripture meant the 430 Years only of the Captivity in *Ægypt*.

But it is yet further evident, that this Term of Years is to commence from the Promiſe; not only from the exact falling out of the Years this way, but from the tenour of the firſt Patriarchs Lives, which were exactly anſwerable to the Character ſpoke of in this Propheſy. For both *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, were all *Sojourners in a Land which was not their own.* The Canaanites were then in the Poſſeſſion and Lordſhip of their own Country, and their Iniquity was not yet ripe enough for God to diſpoſſeſs them of it; and tho they did not undergo ſuch unmerciful Cruelties from the Natives of that Country

Country as from the *Ægyptians*, nor were *afflicted or evil intreated* to ſo high a degree as their Poſterity; yet they lived in conſtant Aw and ſubjection to the *Cananites*, and had ſome differences with them, which are recorded in Scripture, and probably many more, which made the Holy Patriarch to cry out, *Few and Evil have been the Days of my Pilgrimage.* Now if we take the Propheſie to relate to theſe firſt Patriarchs, as we have all the reaſon in the World to think it does, then the number of Years mentioned, *Exod.* 12. 4, agree exactly with the true time from the Promiſe to the Exit of the *Iſraelites.* For *Abraham* being an Hundred Years old begat *Iſaac*, who at the Age of 60 begat *Jacob*, and *Jacob* being 130 Years old comes into *Ægypt*, the ſtay in *Ægypt* upon the Years computation, appear to be 215; to which, if you add the 25 Years the Promiſe was made before the Birth of *Iſaac*; you have the 430 years which the Scriptures mention.

| |
|---|
| 60 |
| 130 |
| 215 |
| 25 |
| 430 |

From

From the Promiſe to *Iſaac*'s Birth—25
From thence to the Birth of *Jacob*—60
Thence to the entrance into *Ægypt* 130
To the Exit ——————————215

In all ——————————————430

*Phil.* I muſt confeſs *Credentius*, you have given ſome not very improbable Solutions to the Objections we are uſed to raiſe againſt the Writings of the Bible, and I cannot but own that thoſe Books are not lyable to all thoſe Abſurdities which are ſometimes charged upon them; and that I am fully ſatisfied, that Perſons of our way do take too great a Liberty in expoſing Paſſages of thoſe Writers which we have not ſufficient ground for. But though you have pretty tolerably rubbed off theſe Imputations againſt Scripture, yet ſtill there is ſomething ſticks behind, and lies very hard upon my mind, and that is the very multitude of the Objections theſe Books are ſubject to. When an abundance of Imputations and hard Things are laid to a Man's charge, though by the Dexterity of his Wit, or Luckineſs of his Circumſtances, he may chance to hit them all off tolerably well; yet ſtill Men will be apt to ſuſpect ſomething worſe of him, becauſe it is hardly ſuppoſable that ſo

great a Number of Allegations ſhould never be charged againſt one of a Perfect Integrity. And in the like manner I urge in the caſe of the Holy Scriptures; that though the Objections againſt theſe Books may be wiped off with tolerable *Solutions*, which the Wit of Divines and prejudiced Chriſtians have put their Brains to wrack to think upon for this purpoſe; yet one cannot imagine why the Bible, of all the Books in the World, ſhould be moſt lyable to theſe Exceptions. When I read a piece of *Livy* or *Florus*, every Thing lies eaſie upon me as I go, the *Matters of Fact* carry Probability with them, and the *Arguments* Solidity; and I am never troubled with thoſe cumberſome *Objections*, which at every ſtep in reading the Bible I am forced to ſtand in need of the *Criticks* to help me out of. This is a Thing I cannot tell what to make of; though I ſhould not be able to convict theſe *Writers* of downright Falſity and Impoſture, yet methinks if they had plain truth of their ſide, they could never be involved in ſo many Difficulties and Perplexities.

*Cred.* But if this be all which ſticks with you, *Philologus*, I think I ſhall be able to give you a ſatisfactory Account, why the Holy Scriptures are more liable to Exceptions than other Books; which I ſhall ſhew do not

not ariſe from the fault of the *Authors*, who compoſed them, but from the neceſſary *Circumſtance* and *Nature* of theſe *Writings*, and the Paſſions and Prejudices of Men.

*Scripture has more Difficulties than other Books from the ſtrangeneſs of the Language, Matter, &c.*

1. It is but very reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that a Book wrote ſo many Ages ago, ſince which, all the Circumſtances of the World have undergone ſo mighty a Change; a Book wrote in a Language, which bears ſo *little* an Analogy with thoſe we converſe in; a Book which delivers new and many unheard-of Doctrines, which the World would be a ſtranger to, without they were read here; That ſpeaks of many *myſterious Points* concerning the *Divine Nature* and the ſurprizing *Diſpenſations* of *God's Providence*; That gives us an account of a *Spiritual Kingdom* and another *World*, which in this imperfect State we can have no exact notices of: Now I ſay, It is but reaſonable to ſuppoſe, That a Book of this Nature ſhould be more lyable to *Difficulties* and *Exceptions* than one wrote after the uſual way of Speaking on this ſide the World, and which talk only of the ordinary Matters we uſually converſe about. Men cannot but now and then ſtick upon framing their minds to theſe lofty Ideas, and in bringing theſe unuſual

Expreſſions to the Level of our ordinary Languages.

*From the multitude of Interpreters.*

2. And beſides, there is another very good Reaſon why, ſometimes, there is more Difficulty in coming to the knowledge of ſome Paſſages of Scripture than of other Books; which is the great Number of thoſe who have Commented upon this Book, and variouſly interpreted Places quoted out of it. For oftentimes Annotators upon Scripture, diſcover too great a *Vanity* in being deſirous to find out ſome New *Interpretation* of a Text, and others do falſely *interpret* it to make good a fond Opinion; or to ſupport a Cauſe; now whereas there have been ſuch a world of *Interpreters* upon the Bible, more than any other Book, and the Paſſages of it are more diverſly explained, it is but reaſonable to ſuppoſe, That ſome Men who have not the exacteſt Judgments, when they have before them all thoſe diverſe *Explications*, ſhould be more puzzl'd in Underſtanding Scripture, than ſome other Books. But however the fault of this is not to be charged upon the Holy Scriptures, but upon Human Infirmity and Paſſion? and any other Book might be liable to the ſame Misfortunes if it was placed in the ſame Circumſtances, and had ſo many diſ-

diſagreeing Opinions to wrack and tenter the ſenſe of it.

*From the Deſign of Wicked Men to oppoſe it.*

3. And ſo likewiſe there is another very *good Reaſon* why we ſhould expect that there ſhould be more Objections raiſed againſt the Authority of the Scriptural Books, and the Doctrines contained in them, than are againſt any other in the World. Becauſe there is no other Author in the World that it is ſo many Mens Intereſt to ſink the Credit of, as of the Bible. All the wicked Men in the World are of a Party againſt theſe Writings, it is their Intereſt to have them proved Impoſtures, and then they think they can Sin on ſecurely. It is no wonder that Lewd Men have no ſet of Objections againſt the Books of *Livy* and *Florus*, becauſe theſe Books are no Check upon them for their Drinking and Whoring; but the Goſpel, which ſo ſtrictly obliges to *Temperance* and *Chaſtity*, and denounces Eternal Damnation againſt *Drunkenneſs* and *Adultery*, muſt needs have all the Wits of theſe Senſual Wretches at Work againſt it; for their Conſciences will never let them be quiet, either till they leave their Sins or Disbelieve the Bible; the former they are reſolved not to do, and therefore they ſet all hands amain to fiſh for Arguments to gain them the glori-

ous Comfort of Infidelity. If the Bible had said nothing against their Sins, they would have had nothing to say against the Bible; or if the History of *Livy* or *Florus* did give a like Curb to Sensuality they would not want something to say to invalidate the Credit of those Books; they would quickly be ready to give out that all *that* Roman Story was contrived by some cunning *Esdras* or other, or some Pious Deceiver, to support thereby the Designs of Priestcraft, and to Tirannize over Mens Minds by Bugbear Tales.

And now, *Philologus*, before I have done with you upon this Head, that I may engage you to a better liking of the Holy Scriptures, and to a more pleasurable Reading of those Sacred Tracts; I would advise you to One or Two Things; which if you and other Persons of your way would observe. I am sure that the Scriptures would stand fairer in your good Opinions than now they do.

*Unbelievers would like Scripture better if they would forbear Drolling upon it*

*First*, I would advise you against Drolling and Ridiculing Scripture, you ought to avoid this Practice, only because it is an Un-gentleman like Quality, and makes you guilty of a great deal of Rudeness in speaking Contemptuously

ouſly of thoſe Writings, which all Chriſtians, which you live amongſt, have the greateſt Reſpect and Veneration for. Why do not you make reflections upon the Reputation of the Fathers and the Wives of the Gentlemen you converſe with, as well as to make ſport with their Faith and the Doctrines of their Redeemer; which to all good Men are equally dear with the other? And I wonder any Man that pretends the leaſt to good Breading ſhould be guilty of ſuch Barbarous Incivility, as to put a good Mans Soul to that Pain, which he ſuſtains at your Playing upon God's Word.

But I muſt further tell you, that by this Practice you put a plain Cheat upon your own Judgment, and will not ſuffer your ſelf to conſider the Scripture, as it is in it ſelf, but as you wantonly repreſent it; & whilſt you continue to do ſo, you are no more able to judge of the Arguments and Style of Scripture, than a Man can judge of the Colours of Things through a pair of Red Spectacles. For then you do not Criticiſe upon the Scriptures, but only upon that awkard thing that you are pleaſed to dreſs up for it. I pray, Sir, do you think that any Man was able to judge of the Excellency of *Virgil*, by *Virgil in Traveſtry?* Could any one find out the Perfections of that noble *Poet*,

the livelineſs of his Deſcriptions, the Spirit and Propriety of his Speeches, and thoſe conſtant Rules of Decency, he, above other Writers is moſt obſervant of; by that Ridiculous Figure, that gallant Poem is moulded into by the ingenious Burleſquer. What a wretched ſilly Thing does *Virgil*'s Hero appear in that Antick Dreſs? And the braveſt Character in the World by the means of that ludricous Art is turned into a mere Fool and Monky, And 'tis the ſame thing when you pick out Paſſages of Scripture, and dreſs them up after this Rate: Do you think that then you can paſs a true Judgment upon them? No, Sir, you only conſider your own awkard Repreſentation, and fallaciouſly perſwade your mind to think the Scriptures as contemptible as you have pictured them. The only way to give them a juſt conſideration is ſeriouſly to read them, and to let them ſpeak their own ſenſe without any of your Artificial Mimickry; and then I am ſure they will appear Solid and Reaſonable enough to all Wiſe and Well-diſpoſed Men.

*If they would ſtudy it in the Original Languages,*

*Secondly*, I would adviſe you to read the Scriptures in the Original Languages they were wrote in, and then you will diſcover a Number of Beauties in

in the Style of theſe *Books* which are hid from you now, and which will render the reading of them much more pleaſant to you. Or however you ſhould make your ſelf acquainted with the Jewiſh Cuſtoms and Phraſes by ſtudying the *Books* of Learned *Hebrew Criticks* which will render the Uſages and Expreſſions of that Nation more familiar to your mind, ſo that by this you will be *better pleaſed*, with the *Alluſions* and *Phraſeology* of theſe Sacred *Writings* than you were before.

*If they would lead a good Life.*

*Thirdly*, To have a True Taſt of the *Scripture Style*, and to read it with the utmoſt Agreeableneſs and Pleaſure, you ſhould take care to practice the *Goſpel Vertues*. It is impoſſible that a ſincerely good Man, of any Perſuaſion whatſoever, ſhould not read the Sacred *Writings* with ſome Satisfaction and Pleaſure; for let him be never ſo much an Infidel to the *Chriſtian Religion*, yet, if he have a mind truly *vertuous* and *good*, he cannot but be affected here with that Spirit of Piety and Love of *God*, with thoſe noble Strains of *Devotion* and *Zeal* for *Vertue* and *God's Honour*, and which thoſe excellent Rules for a *Holy Life*, which are not to be found in other *Books*. No Man can be unaffected at reading theſe Things in the *Holy Scriptures*,

*Scriptures*, but those who by an ill Life shew they have no value for them; and I am confident, *Philologus*, by as much *Pagan Morality* as I see you to profess, you cannot but sometimes in your mind afford them some manner of esteem. But if you would proceed further in a Course of *Christian Goodness*, if you would come to practice that Meekness and Self-denyal, that Forgiveness of Injuries and Loving of Enemies, those frequent Returns of Devotion, that Charitableness to our Neighbour, that Contempt of the World, and the Ardent Love of *God* which the Gospel teaches; you would think the *Holy Scriptures*, which inforce these Duties by the most powerful Arguments, to be the most Delightful Book to read in the World. A Pious Man's Soul will be inflamed with a sweet and most pleasing Passion, when he beholds such a lively Copy of these Vertues set forth in the Life of the Blessed *Jesus*; to read how Meek he was under his Reproaches, how Patient under his Sufferings, and how Fervent in his Devotions; how zealous for *God's Honour*, how charitably good to the Distressed, and what a generous Lover of, and a Benefactor to the Souls of Mankind. Such a Person when he observes what a Christian Bravery and Noble Contempt of Death is to

be

be found in the Lives and Writings of the Apoſtles, what admirable *Arguments* for a *Good Life*, and the *Sufferings* for *Chriſt*'s ſake; he cannot but feel his Soul warmed, and in a manner tranſported, with an unexpreſſible Pleaſure, far Superiour to any that is to be attained by reading the moſt Eloquent of the *Heathen Books*; for theſe only pleaſe the Fancy for a while, by an agreeable Chiming of Words, and Turn of Thought; but the other give us that ſolid Joy and Satisfaction, which the Reflections of a Good Conſcience and the Hopes of Heaven will afford.

## *Of the* Truth *and* Excellency *of the* Chriſtian Religion.

*Cred.* WHat is the reaſon of all this muſing, *Philologus?* What terrible Objections are we to be attacked with next?

*Phil.* Why, truly, *Credentius*, I am ſtudying what to ſay further to you; but you have beat me off from every Hold, that I am at a loſs, what Branch of Infidelity to lay hold upon at laſt. I am now neither Pagan nor Chriſtian, my Soul hangs in a perfect *Æquilibrium*; it trembles ſometimes to this, and ſometimes to the other ſide,

ſide, and knows not where to fix. And now but a little more weight to turn the Scale, give me, I beſeech you, but ſome poſitive Proof of the Truth of Chriſtianity, after you have ſo fairly anſwered the Objections againſt it; and then, my Dear *Credentius*, I am your Convert for ever. Oh! were it as much in my Power as I am willing to be a Chriſtian; I am throughly perſuaded that there is that ſolid Comfort and Satisfaction in a True Chriſtian Holineſs; that to enjoy it I could be willing to be deceived into your Belief: There is ſuch a Peacefulneſs and Serenity of Mind in living the Life of the ſtricteſt Virtue, and ſuch a raviſhing Delight in the Aſſurance of Everlaſting Happineſs; that I really would endeavour to attain this Satisfaction, tho' there were nothing in it but the Pleaſing Phantaſm and Deluſion.

*Cred.* God be thanked, that you are come to this Temper: and may the Grace of his Holy Spirit finiſh the Work that is begun in you. If God of his Infinite Goodneſs may 'haply make me an Inſtrument to Your Good, I ſhall think theſe Hours I have ſpent in diſcourſing with you upon theſe Subjects, the beſt laid out of any time of my whole Life. But there are ſo many excellent Books already wrote upon the Subject

Subject you are now putting me upon; that I think you had better have recourſe to them for ſatisfaction in this matter; and probably you cannot be a Stranger to their Arguments already, only you want, it may be, to conſider them more attentively.

*Phil.* I beſeech you, my Good *Credentius*, not to deny me this laſt Requeſt: as you have been already ſuccesful, I pray go on to compleat your Conqueſt over me. If you do not perfectly make a Convert of me now, I am in great danger of relapſing when my Infidel Acquaintance have ſprung new Scruples in my Head. As to the reading Books in Defence of the Chriſtian Religion, I muſt confeſs to my ſhame I have hardly ever read any; ſince I was ſettled in Infidelity I have always been afraid of ſuch Books, for fear of unhinging my Mind, and making me not to be ſuch a thorough-paced Unbeliever as I was willing to be. And ſince that time my Trade has been, not to hear what has been ſaid for Chriſtianity, but to pick up every thing which can be ſaid againſt it.

*Cred.* I am ſorry you have been driving ſo ungodly a Trade, and I hope in God for the future, you will better employ thoſe excellent Parts God has bleſſed you with. Tho' by the by, I cannot but admire

mire, that your Gentlemen ſhould think Infidelity ſo fine a thing, as to be afraid of loſing it; and that they ſhould talk ſo much againſt the Chriſtian Religion, when they have never given themſelves the Trouble of underſtanding the Grounds of it. But ſince you have laid this new Task upon me, I will endeavour to do you what ſervice I can; and will lay before you ſome few Principal Arguments to ſatisfie you of the Unreaſonableneſs of your Unbelief of the Truth and Excellency of the Chriſtian Religion.

## *Argument* I.

*Drawn from the fooliſh Scheme of Infidel Principles.*

It is no inconſiderable Argument to prove the Unreaſonableneſs of your Infidelity, and the Truth of that Holy Religion you are wont to oppoſe; To conſider the ſillineſs of that Scheme of Principles, which you go upon. Were our Chriſtian Grounds ſuch looſe and precarious Things as your Infidel ones are, what an out-cry would you raiſe againſt Us? But all your Contradictious huddle of Fanciful Dreams, and Surmiſes muſt be deemed forſooth, not Belief, but Good Senſe and Reaſonings. I know it is a Fundamental

tal Article of your Religion to believe nothing; (that is) nothing which you dont like; but then you have a Creed of your own, made out of Mr. *Hobbs*'s Dogmatical *Pronunciations*, and *Spinoſa*'s confident Aſſertions, twice as long as the *Athanaſian*, and far more difficult. You think it too great a ſtrain for your Belief to own that the World was made by the Creation and Contrivance of a Wiſe and Good God; but then you can eaſily cloſe with the Contradictions, Hypotheſis of Atheiſtick Philoſophers, that this World is nothing, but God himſelf tumbled and toſſed in variety of Figures, and ſeparated into ſo many diverſe Parts as there are different material Beings; tho' at the ſame time the Pains and Follies, Imperfections & deformities of theſe *Things* ſhew, that they can be no more but poor and dependent Creatures of an All-happy, Impaſſible, All-ſufficient Being, who you have faith to believe is Paſſible by the meaneſt part of his Creation. You cannot vouchſafe to believe the Scripture Hiſtory, that all mankind have deſcended within this ſix thouſand years from one Original; but then you can credit their impoſſible Aſſertion, that make the World eternally, tho' 'tis plain it would have

*Groundleſs Objections of the Infidels againſt Chriſtianity.*

have been overſtocked millions of years ago; and when you are urged with this Difficulty, you can believe as many Plagues and Deluges to obviate this Objection, as you pleaſe. Above all the things in the World you cannot believe a Miracle, but you can believe, that this Wonderful thing which was thus indubitably aſſerted, was done by ſome uncommon Power of Nature; that the Long Day in *Joſhua*'s time came to paſs by the refraction of the Solar Rays; and that the Blind and Lame in the Goſpel were healed (and the Dead too I ſuppoſe raiſed) by the Fancy of the Patients. You cannot believe that Chriſt roſe from the Dead, tho' he was talked to by ſome, and handled by others, frequently converſed with by his Diſciples, and viewed by 500 Chriſtians, many of which laid down their Lives for this Teſtimony; yet you can believe a ſimple Jewiſh Forgery, that his Diſciples ſtole away his Body from amid'ſt the Guards, though 'tis plain, the day before they had not Courage enough to ſtay with him at his Trial. It is too hard a thing to perſuade you that the Moſaical and the Prophetical Books were wrote by thoſe Ancient Perſons, whom the Jewiſh Nation, among whom the Authors lived, have always aſcribed them to; but you can believe that

ſome

ſome few *Athieſtical Criticks*, who lived many thouſand years after, can aſſign them a *better Original*, and that *Eſdras*, after the *Captivity*, wrote all thoſe *Books*, which the *Jews* thought were wrote ſo long before; partly to aggrandize the Office of the *Prieſthood*, and the *Jewiſh* Race, and partly to exerciſe his Faculty of *Writing*.

*Their fooliſh Scheme of Morality.*

And as you oppoſe that Revealed *Religion*, which we profeſs by ſuch a ſilly and groundleſs Set of *Suppoſitions*, which no Wiſe Man, upon conſideration, can aſſent to; ſo you ſhew as little Reaſon in drawing out that Scheme of Natural *Religion*, which you pretend to advance in Oppoſition to the *Chriſtians*. You raiſe trifling Objections againſt our *Saviour's Doctrines*, but what do you ſay to theſe extravagant *Paradoxes* and *Irregularities* in the *Books* and *Lives* of your *Philoſophers*, that you ſo much depend upon? Can you find a compleat Rule of *Morals* among them, whoſe Lives were oftentimes an Habit of Lewdneſs, and whoſe *Books* ſtill will make us bluſh? You reject the Splendor of Chriſtianity, which has brought Life and Immortality to light; and are content to take up with a miſerable uncertainty about a future State, depending only upon ſlight

*Philoſophical Conjectures*, which after all have little or no influence upon your Party; but as I have heard them frequently affirming that they believed their Horſes had as great a ſhare of *Immortality* as themſelves. What is all your *Rational Morality*, you are wont ſometimes to boaſt your ſelves ſo of, but only a little vain, uncertain and partial Reaſoning? What is that Principle of Honour which you ſo much extol, but only an unregenerate Pride and a ſcorning to do like the reſt of the World? With you *Vertuous*, is nothing elſe but Reputable, and what the *Country* and the *Perſons* you live among reſpects; therefore among Libertines you make no Conſcience of being Lewd, though you are aſhamed it may be to be Knaviſh; and when you are out of the eyes of Men, who might cenſure you for it, you ſtick not to Defame or Defraud, Stab or Poiſon, or to commit any of the moſt execrable Villany or Lewdneſs that can be named. For in this caſe the Spur of *Reputation*, which is your only Motive, is gone; and a Man may have the Credit of being *Vertuous* in the Eye of the *World*, though he be never ſo Wicked in the Dark. *Drunkenneſs* is frequently among the Gentlemen of your way reaſoned into no Vice, becauſe it is a Sociable and Inoffenſive Pleaſure; and *Whoredom* is

is made Blameleſs, for being but a Compliance with Natural Inclination. Nay the moſt *abominable* Luſts, which Chriſtians muſt not name, have their *Advocates* for them among you. By the help of your *Natural Religion*, you can find *Reaſons* to ſlight and deſpiſe your *Wives*, and advance young *Whores* over their Heads, for no other reaſon but that they are Younger or Handſomer; you can find *Reaſons* to betray and undermine your *Friends*, when Self-intereſt comes in the way; and to juſtifie the moſt Ungenerous Revenge and Outragious Cruelty, becauſe *Honour* forſooth is reflected upon.

Now, I pray, *Philologus*, conſider, if any reaſonable Man, upon *ſerious thought*, can take up with theſe Principles. Methinks it ſhould be a moſt *Convincing Argument* of the *Truth* of our *Religion*, that Men, who are ſo maliciouſly ſet againſt it ſhould ſo weakly oppoſe it; and that thoſe, who are for *pulling down Chriſtianity*, are for *advancing a Scheme of pretended Morality*, which is made up of nothing but Paſſion, and Lewdneſs, and Inconſiſtency. How can you in Juſtice oppoſe that *Religion* which you have nothing, or but the ſillieſt things, to ſay againſt? How can you pretend to regulate your Practice by thoſe Principles, which

open a Door to all the Villany in the World? Moſt certainly if our *Religion* was a Cheat, you would be able to find out ſome ſtronger *objections* to attack it with; and if your Set of Principles were the True Religion, it ſhould methinks gain ſome Holier Profeſſros, than moſt of thoſe of your ſide are, who cry it up. Come, come, *Philologus*, don't impoſe upon your ſelf any longer; it is eaſier to believe the *Chriſtian Creed*, than all thoſe *Philoſophical Paradoxes* and *Bantering Stuff*, which the Infidels advance againſt it; but as for the *Doctrines* which our *Religion* teaches, they tend to make Men *good* and *ſober*; whilſt yours are calculated only for the uſe of *Rakes* and *Libertines*.

*Phil.* I am ſorry our Party ſhould have given ſo great Cauſe for this Cenſure. But what is your next Argument.

*Argument* II.

*Drawn from the Harmony of the Parts of Chriſtianity.*

*Cred.* My next Argument ſhall be drawn from the extraordinary *Harmony of the Parts of the Chriſtian Religion.* There is hardly any Lye or Miſtake but what has one part of it claſhing and interfering with another, and

and it ſeldom or never happens that any thing but Truth is ſolely of a piece with it ſelf. Therefore it is a conſiderable Proof, that Chriſtianity is no Forgery, becauſe among ſuch Variety of Parts, ſo much Hiſtory, ſo many Moral Doctrines and Articles of Faith, there is nothing to be found Repugnant or Contradictory. For moſt certainly no Man ever told a Lie ſo long as the whole Bible, but that he would contradict himſelf a Hundred times over, and diſcover many moſt manifeſt marks of the Impoſture. But when we further conſider, what a wonderful *Harmony* runs thro' the whole Scheme of Chriſtianity, and how ſurprizingly agreeable one part of it is with another, as is impoſſible that the Wit or Subtilty of Man ſhould ever contrive; this gives us perfect Demonſtration of its Divine Original, and does as ſtrongly convince a conſidering Man that the *Goſpel* was taught, as he is perſuaded that the World was made by God. For as 'tis impoſſible that ſuch a wiſely contrived World could ever be made by any thing but by an All-wiſe God, ſo 'tis likewiſe impoſſible that an Inſtitution of ſuch admirable Beauty and Symmetry of Parts as the Chriſtian, ſhould ow its frame to any thing leſs than the ſame Divine Wiſdom. Should we grant you for once, that the A-

poſtles might make ſome few Sham-Stories about Jeſus Chriſt his Birth and Reſurrection, and feign ſome wonderful Actions done by him; yet 'tis as impoſſible for them to have contrived the whole Scheme of Chriſtianity, as it had been for them to have made the World. Here are an Hundred Things in this wiſe Diſpenſation, that ſurpaſs all Foreſight and Capacity; and we diſcover many wonderful Correſpondencies in it, which it is impoſſible that any Man before hand could have thought of, had he been to have erected ſuch a Scheme; unleſs you will ſuppoſe that Men could combine together who lived near Two thouſand Years aſunder. I will inſtance, in ſome Particulars, that you may clearly ſee the force of this Argument. There is an extraordinary Correſpondence in that Account, which the Chriſtian Religion teaches as to the Beginning and End of the World, that it ſhould be made out of a Watery Chaos, and be deſtroyed by a Conflagration of Fire, this muſt needs be allowed to have a very Rational and Philoſophical Appearance, and Curiouſly of a piece with it ſelf, and would be a Beautiful Scheme of the *Mundan Revolution*, if it had been gueſſed at only by any ſingle Mans thoughts, but yet it appears more Divinely Harmonious, and out of the power of Man to contrive,

trive, when this Scheme was delivered by two ſeveral Men ſeemingly of no Philoſophical Genius's; one Part of it given by *Moſes*, and the other by St. *Peter*, almoſt two thouſand years after. You cannot but allow that there is a ſurprizing Correſpondence between the Predictions of the Old Teſtament, and their Completions in the New, and that 'tis a very Extraordinary Thing, that ſo many Propheſies, that were acknowledged by all the Jewiſh Antiquities, to be Predictions of the Meſſias, ſhould all ſo very luckily correſpond with the Actions of Jeſus Chriſt, and no body elſe. And you may likewiſe obſerve how curiouſly, by Degrees, the Goſpel Light is uſher'd in; how the firſt dawning of it Breaks it ſelf, tho' obſcurely, to the fallen Progenitors, and more clearly yet to the Patriarchs and Founders of the Jewiſh Race; how yet a greater degree of Light does manifeſt it ſelf to the later Prophets, ſtill more and more, till the riſing of the *Sun of Righteouſneſs* himſelf, and the Goſpel was diſplayed in its Meridian Glory, in the Life and Doctrines of our Bleſſed Lord. It is extraordinary ſurprizing, that the Old Ceremonial Law ſhould bear ſuch an exact Correſpondence with the Goſpel; that thoſe Uncouth Ritual Uſages ſhould for many Ages

have no tolerable Account given of them, and yet upon the Appearance of Jeſus Chriſt, men might perceive that his Life and Doctrines were ſuch, that thoſe Ceremonies did as exactly prefigure them, as if one would have invented Hieroglyphicks purpoſely to repreſent them. How excellent a piece is the Fall of Man by *Adam*, in the Hiſtory of the Creation, and the Redemption by Chriſt in the Hiſtory of the Goſpel; ſo that theſe things could not more exactly correſpond, if *Moſes* and the Evangeliſts had caballed together to draw up the Scheme. Now from whence can you ſay proceeds all this ſuprizing Harmony, of which you cannot give a like Inſtance in the World? You do not ſee any thing like this in the Hiſtories of *Herodotus* and *Livy*, or any other Hiſtorical Relations. But you may plainly ſee, that there is the ſame Thought and Deſign runs through the Old and New Teſtament, and every thing ſeems to be managed by one general Contrivance; ſo that whoſoever had a hand in the Methods of the Goſpel, had the greateſt ſhare in the Old Law and Prophets too. Therefore you muſt grant one of theſe two things, either that the Apoſtles invented the Moſaical Law, and all the Old Teſtament as well as the Chriſtian Religion, which will be a little

little too bold for you to aſſert; or elſe that the All-wiſe God was the Author of both theſe Inſtitutions, the latter of which was prefigured by the former; that it was he that made the Predictions and the Completions ſo admirably agree; that he occaſioned all theſe ſurpriſing Analogies and Similitudes for the Confirmation of our Faith, and ſuited every thing in the moſt curious Harmony throughout the whole Diſpenſation of Providence, from the Fall of Man to his Redemption, from the making to the Burning of the World.

Add to this the Harmonious Correſpondence between the Exterior Parts of Chriſtianity, how aptly all things therein are contrived; a *Baptiſm* to initiate into the Community of Chriſt's Church, and *Excommunication* to expell out of it; the Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*, to commemorate, and to convey the Benefits of his Paſſion, and *Abſolution* to reſtore fallen Chriſtians: *Biſhops* to overlook the Flock, *ſubordinate Paſtors* to feed it, and *Deacons* to perform other Offices in the Church. Add farther the Doctrines of Chriſt's *Satisfaction* and *Interceſſion* for the Pardon of Mens *Sins*, and the hearing their Prayers; a Future *Judgment* of mens Actions in this World; and in the next the Recompenſe of

*Eter-*

*Eternal Glory* for the Good, and *Damnation* for the Bad. Such an admirable Scheme of Religion as this, is not only impoſſible to be invented by a few poor unlearned Fiſhermen, but does ſurpaſs the Capacities of the Greateſt Wits and Scholars in the World to put together. The Hypotheſis of *Plato* and *Ariſtotle*, and thoſe other Famous Sages among the Heathen, are poor miſerable incongruous Stuff in reſpect of this noble Inſtitution; and are as inferior to it, as the little Feats of Art to the wonderous Works of God and Nature.

*Phil.* I confeſs there is a great deal of Uniformity to be obſerved in the whole Buſineſs of the Redemption; but why might not this Scheme be wrought into this Order by Degrees, and why might not the Diſciples feign the Actions of Chriſt to be ſuch as the Jews expected thoſe of the Meſſias to be from the Types and Propheſies in Scripture.

*Cred.* To this I anſwer, *Philologus*, that this Scheme of Chriſtianity could never grow into this Beautiful Order by the Caſualty of new Additions. Such a Contrivance might make perhaps juſt a tolerable appearance, but could never diſplay ſuch a charming Regularity as our Religion does. That would look juſt like a Houſe patch'd

up

up by Degrees at different Times; where all the Art imaginable cannot hide the deformities: whilſt the whole Draught of Chriſtianity does reſemble a Beautiful Structure raiſed at once, where every thing is adapted with Order Decency and Deſign. As for what you object further, that the Apoſtles feigned the Actions of Chriſt, correſpondent to the Prophetical Predictions, pardon me if I ſay this is a very ſilly ſuppoſition. For the Apoſtles might as well have forged thoſe Propheſies as the Actions of our Lord; for thoſe Actions of Jeſus Chriſt were altogether as well known to the Jewiſh Nation as the Propheſies themſelves. For how could they forge his Miracles, which ſo many thouſand Jews had ſenſible experience of, and of which his Enemies were ſo convinced, that they attributed them only to a Diabolical Cauſe? How could they feign the manner of his Death, when he ſo often told his Followers, that it was the Will of God, that he ſhould die, and ſhew'd by what kind of Death he ſhould lay down his Life for his Flock; when he was condemned to be crucified by a *Roman* Judge, and died in the Face of almoſt all the Jewiſh Nation, at their great Confluence to the Paſſover? Nay, all the Actions of Chriſt were ſo remarkable, that

it

it was impoſſible that the Apoſtles could frame a Hiſtory about Him which was not true, at a time eſpecially when ſo great a part of the Jews knew what he did as well as they.

*Phil.* I thank you for this Information, and I deſire you would proceed to your next Argument.

### *Argument* III.

*From the great Progreſs of Chriſtianity in the World.*

*Cred.* My next Argument is drawn from the ſpeedy Progreſs of Chriſtianity, notwithſtanding the many Difficulties it had to encounter with. If I had no other Arguments for the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion but this, of the Incredible Progreſs of it againſt all Oppoſition, I could not but think it to be from God, who alone could procure it ſuch an unparalled ſucceſs. Do you conſider with your ſelf how miraculouſly it looks, that twelve poor Mechanicks ſhould diſperſe themſelves into different parts of the World, to preach an unheard of Religion, contrary to the Laws every where eſtabliſhed, and even to mens Natural Appetites and Inclinations; and yet this ſtrange Religion ſhould ſo every where prevail, that within

in twenty or thirty years after Chriſt's Aſcention, it ſhould have footing in all the principal Parts of the Roman Empire; that Churches of it ſhould be ſettled, not only at *Jeruſalem*, but at *Antioch*, *Smyrna*, *Corinth*, *Epheſus*, *Alexandria*, and even at *Rome* it ſelf. A few years after we find a greater Increaſe; for in *Trajan's* time, and in *Bithynia*, one of the more obſcure Parts of the Roman Empire, the Chriſtians were grown ſo many, that *Pliny*, the Proconſul, was forced to write to the Emperor to know what to do with them. *Viſa eſt mihi res digna conſultatione maxime propter periclitantium multitudinem, &c. It ſeems to be a thing worthy of Conſultation; eſpecially by reaſon of the great multitude of thoſe who are in danger. For many of every Age and every Order, and both Sexes are and will incur the Danger of being Criminals. For the Contagion of the Chriſtian Superſtition has not only run thro' the Cities, but infected Towns and Villages and Farms. The Temples of the Gods are almoſt deſolate, our moſt Solemn Rites are omitted, and the Augurs of Sacrifices are but a very few.* Now this dreadful Complaint, by this Heathen Gentleman, of the mighty Increaſe of the Chriſtians was not much

*Iren. Lib. 1.*
*Tertul. Adv. Jud.*

much above threeſcore years after Chriſt's Aſcention. But in the next Age, the Apologiſt's glory, that Chriſtianity was ſpread to the remoteſt Corners of the World, among the *Indians*, *Mauritanians*, *Getulians*, *Spaniards* and *Britans*; among the *Sarmatians*, the *Daci*, the *Germans* and the *Scyths*. And *Tertullian* does in particular brave the Heathen with the incredible ſucceſs of Chriſtianity. *Herſterni ſumus & veſtra omnia implevimus, Urbes, Inſulas Caſtella, municipia, conciliabula caſtra ipſa, tribus, decuria, palatium, ſenatum, forum. Sola vobis relinquimus Templa. We are but of yeſterdays growth, and yet we are ſo numerous as to fill all the Places which you call Yours: We fill the Cities, the Iſlands, the Caſtles, the Burrows, the Counſels, the Camps themſelves; the Tribes, the Decuria, the Palace, the Senate, the Forum. We leave nothing for You but only your Temples.* Now can any one imagine that ſuch a Sect as this ſhould ſo prodigiouſly increaſe, unleſs it was aſſiſted by the Divine Power? Unleſs God had lent his Arm to ſupport it, the Secular Power would have cruſhed it to nothing, and Chriſtianity would not have ſurvived even one Perſecution. If the Religion they propagated had been a Sham-Invented Story; there would have been ſo many In-

Inconſiſtences found out in it by acute men, and the Vouchers of it would be ſo Inconſtant, that the firſt Preachers of it, inſtead of being reverenced and admired, would have been laughed where ever they come. Or if ſuch idle Fancies ſhould have prevailed, they would in little time have grown out of faſhion again, like the Philoſophical Dogmata; and ſomething elſe have been ſet up in their place; or however this, like other wild Enthuſiaſms, would have kept the people a madding but a few years, and ſuffered them to return to their ſelves at laſt, but it is impoſſible that it could ever have ſpread ſo wide, and laſted ſo long as Chriſtianity has done. Or, if ſuch a Religion could by natural means have chanced to find ſucceſs in one or two Cities, yet how ſhould it come to do ſo all the World over? It had been pretty much, if two or three of the Apoſtles had thrived upon their Impoſture, conſidering how many cheats daily are diſcovered; but that every one of them, and all that they Commiſſioned, ſhould put a Sham upon the Inhabitants of every place wherever they came, is a thing perfectly incredible, *Philologus*, and impoſſible: And the Unbelievers muſt aſſign a Cauſe how this could come to paſs, or they muſt own with

with us a Divine Power in it; seeing no such thing ever did, and I dare say, never will again happen in the World.

*Growth of Christianity against Wit and Learning.*

But it is yet more incredible to think, that this came to pass without the Divine Assistance, if we consider, 1. The *Wit* and *Learning* of those who did oppose the Propagation of Christianity. For these endowments do often defend, and keep up the grossest Errors, and retard the progress of the Truth, even against the Endeavours of those of equal Qualifications; but that these Wise and Learned Men should suffer their Country Religion every where to be run down by an Idle Story, and not be able by all their Parts and Learning to support it against the Attacks of a few Fishermen; and that there should be nothing else in this but pure Chance, is what a Prudent Man can never believe. Or if we consider, 2. The

*Secular Power.*

*Secular Power*, by which the other Religions which Christianity prevailed against were established. The Laws and Government in favour of any Opinion are a mighty support to it; for these in most parts of the World are sufficient, we find, to uphold the silliest Superstitions, against Truth and Reason.

Reaſon. Then how can we think that theſe ſhould loſe all their Efficacy upon the Preaching of the Goſpel by meer chance, and that Men ſhould ſuffer their own Country Religion to be neglected, and a foreign one embraced, and all the Power and Policy they could imploy ſhould not be able to hinder it. And this is yet more incredible to think if we conſider (3.) The *Prejudice* Men muſt have againſt ſuch a New Religion. *Prejudice.*

If God Almighty had not aſſiſted the Apoſtles Preaching, the very Biaſs upon Mens minds in favour of the reſpective Religions, they had been Educated in, would have kept them from embracing Chriſtianity; for though you may ſuppoſe ſome few Men to be of free Thoughts and more diſintereſted Affections, yet when you conſider what ſtrong prepoſſeſſions Education lays upon our Souls, you cannot but own that, when whole Cities and Countries all of a ſudden ſhould throw aſide their moſt Ancient, Splendid, and Sacred Rites they had been bred up too for a deſpiſed New Religion, that there muſt be the finger of God interpoſing in ſuch an unheard of Event, and over-ruling Mens Paſſions and Inordinations for his moſt Wiſe Purpoſe. Which Argument is yet more convincing, if we conſider how this Prejudice was high-

tened by the *Severity* of that Religion they were to embrace; when the Converts could not but know that they left an eaſie and pompous Religion that was calculated to gratifie Mens Pride and Luxury, and all other Carnal Affections, for one that obliged them to mortifie their deareſt Luſts, and oftentimes to deny themſelves the craving even of innocent Deſires; and yet for all this, that ſo many myriads of People ſhould quit this eaſe and ſenſual ſatisfaction for the rigor of the ancient Chriſtian Diſcipline, and the ſeverity of our Lord's Precepts, is a moſt amazing thing to reflect upon. (4.) So we cannot but own the ſame Power of God in the Progreſs of Chriſtianity, when we look upon the *Perſecutions*, the firſt Propagators and Profeſſors did encounter with. It is impoſſible that Impoſtors could ever have had the courage to have undergone thoſe cruel Sufferings which the Apoſtles and Primitive Chriſtians did, thoſe Crucifixions, Burnings, Broilings, Divulſions of their Limbs, and other moſt horrid Tortures, which their Perſecutors ſtudied to invent; theſe would quickly have made any Falſificators to have owned their Cheat, and indeed would have put a ſtop to any new Sect whatſoever, but that which God Almighty was reſolved to keep up

*Perſecution.*

up. (5.) But the Progreſs of the Goſpel appears yet more miraculous, when we conſider the *meanneſs of the Propagators*. It would not have been ſo great a Wonder if the Apoſtles had been the wiſeſt and learnedſt Men in the World; for then the ſtrength of their Natural Parts, and the Advantage of their Studies might have born down weaker peoples Underſtandings, and managed them at their pleaſure: But it amazes one to think that ſuch mean illiterate Perſons that never had ſo much as the Advantage of their own Country Learning ſhould confound the Philoſophy of the more refined parts of the World; that whereas the moſt celebrated Sects of the Philoſophers had continued many Ages add yet were confined within a very ſcanty number of Diſciples, notwithſtanding the Greatneſs of their Parts and the depth of their Learning, theſe ſhould draw all the World *Proſelytes* after them, and make Men Diſciples of the Chriſtian Philoſophy wherever they came. If ever there was an intervention of the Divine Power in Human Affairs it was here, when Ignorance and Simplicity had not only the Advantage of, but did triumph over all the Wit and Learning in the World.

*Notwithſtanding the meanneſs of the Propagaters.*

*Phil.* But methinks, Sir, this Argument is not ſo very concluſive as you imagine, for *Mahometaniſm* and *Quakeriſm* ſpread very largely in a very little time, and yet you will not allow the Aſſiſtance of the Divine Power in theſe Inſtances; or, however if you will admit it in favour of the Quaker you will not compliment the Turk ſo far. Then why might not the Sect of the Chriſtians be as lucky as theſe?

*Cred.* As to the Progeſs of *Mahometaniſm*, That proceeded upon Methods perfectly different from thoſe of Chriſtianity. It is no great wonder that *Mahomet* ſo widely extended his Religion, when he Taught it with his Sword in his Hand, and had power to make the poor Conquer'd Wretches ſay they would be of any Religion he had a mind they ſhould; but there is the Miracle in the Propagation of Chriſtianity, that it was carried on with all the Meekneſs & Peaceableneſs imaginable, without the leaſt force, without the leaſt ſedition or tumult, only by a gentle Perſuaſion of Mens minds and Converſion of their hearts, whilſt all the force and power which were employed to ſupport the *Mahometan* Impoſture, were turned againſt this Holy Inſtitution. Add to this, that *Mahometaniſm* did firſt ſpread

*Progreſs of Mahometaniſm no Parallel.*

ſpread in an ignorant Age, and among the moſt Stupid and Barbarous Nations, among the wild *Arabs* and *Cophts*; whilſt Chriſtianity diſplay'd it ſelf in the midſt of the Roman Empire, ſent forth its firſt Emiſſaries to *Athens* and *Rome*, at a time when Learning and Arts were in their Full and Meridian Glory.

*Nor that of Quakeriſm.*

But as to the ſpreading of Quakeriſm, there is no manner of compariſon between this and the Propagation of the Chriſtian Religion. 1. For the Quakers, though the Sect has been up a pretty many Years, yet they are not the hundreth part of the number of the Chriſtians, ſo few Years after Chriſts Death, as *Nero*'s Reign. For at that time, even in the City of *Rome*, there were ſo many of them that, as *Tacitus* ſays, *ingens Multitudo*, a vaſt multitude of them were exacted under pretence of burning the City.

Now in ſo prodigious a City as *Rome* then was, being Sixty Miles in compaſs, there muſt be many thouſands of Chriſtians to be at all taken notice of, eſpecially that a part of that ſhould be called *ingens Multitudo*; and probably as many of them were there as there are now Quakers in *England*; but if we conſider the vaſt numbers of the Chriſtians in all the other parts of the *Ro-*

*man* Empire, the number of the Quakers is perfectly inconsiderable to them. 2. Neither is it such a Wonder that Quakerism did increase as that Christianity should. For the Quakers did not pretend to teach a new Religion, but only to refine upon the antient Christianity; for if the first Ringleaders of this Sect had presumed to have run down Jesus Christ, and the Christian Religion, as the Apostles did the Ceremonial Law, and the Gentile Superstitions, their zealous Followers at *York* and *Bristol* would with the utmost Horor, have abandoned, instead of following these new Guides. Neither is it a strange thing for such Sects in a short time greatly to increase; for *Arians*, *Nestorians*, *Novatians*, *Donalists* have in as little a time been as numerous as the Quaker, but the Apostolick Christianity is the only instance in the World that did so miraculously Thrive without any humane Support, and against all prejudice and opposition. 3. Add to this further, That the Quakers never underwent any of that dreadful Persecution, which the poor primitive Christians did, one of those Storms which so frequently befel them, would have made this Sect have Shrunk into nothing, which are now kept up only by a few Wram Brains, and a Politick Interest. Nay Quakers has been

been ſo far from being retarded by Perſecution, that it has been much advanced by the Incouragement of the Nation, and by ſeculiar Intereſt. I know not whether Quakeriſm, be ſo much a Sect of Religion, as a Fraternity of Commerce; but however their dealing with one another, their advancing one anothers Trade, and recruting decay'd Stocks and the like, has made them ten to one more Proſelytes than the *Light within*. Nay, 'tis reaſonable to believe, that worldly minded Men do often betake themſelves to that Sect, to thrive the better in their Trade; when they perceive that the Vulgar will chooſe to deal with them above others, out of a fond Conceit that they ſell the better Bargins. Theſe are Advantages ſufficient to increaſe a Party to a greater Strength than Quakeriſm can pretend to: But Chriſtianity received a far larger Increaſe without any ſecular Intereſt to ſupport it, and when Men could get nothing by embracing it, but Poverty and Diſgrace, Perſecution or Martyrdom.

*Phil.* I confeſs this Increaſe of Chriſtianity is very ſtrange. What have you to urge next.

## *Argument* IV.

*Cred.* It is an undeniable Argument of the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, that its Propheſies are ſo exactly compleated. I do not deſign to meddle now with the Antient Predictions concerning Chriſt, having diſpatched that Matter already: *I ſhall only touch upon one or two Propheſies contained in the Books of the New Teſtament, which will clearly evince the Divinity of the Chriſtian Religion, which is taught therein. Now whoſoever has the Power of Propheſy, or predicting future Contingents, has the Power of God; becauſe none but God can predict future Contingents. So that whatſoever Lawgiver or Propegator of a New Religion, ſhall foretel Things that are Contingent, ſuch a Legiſlator or Preacher is aſſiſted by God, who communicates to him a Power which none can have but by Him, and therefore does by that confirm ſuch a ones Doctrines, by the Atteſtation of his Divine Power; unleſs you can ſuppoſe that God almighty would lend his Divine Power for the incouraging Cheats and Impoſtures, which is both abſurd and impoſſible. Therefore

*From the Propheſies contained in the New Teſtament,* * Part III.

fore we have nothing elſe to do to be ſatisfied of the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, and to know whither or no God almighty has approved it; but only to inquire whither its firſt Propagators did really predict any ſuch future Contingents, which it was out of the natural Power of Mankind to foretel. Now there are ſeveral ſuch Things foretold by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and therefore the Religion taught by them is atteſted by God and conſequently True. And if we ſay, that our Saviours foretelling of the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, is a True and Proper Propheſy, which no one but by the Spirit of God could foretel. Chriſt does expreſly ſay, That within a ſhort time *Jeruſalem* ſhould be laid waſt, and not *one Stone of the Temple ſhould be left upon another.* Mat. 24. 2. Now how ſhould any one without the Divine foreknowledge, come to think of ſuch an improbable Thing? The *Jews* at that time enjoy'd under the *Roman* Protection perfect Peace and Tranquility, and they were ſo far from fearing a Deſtruction of their City, that they beheld it every Day enlarged and beautified by the Magnificence of the *Herodian* Family. No one could expect that City to be deſtroy'd by any other Power, whilſt

*Propheſy of the Deſtruction of* Jeruſalem.

it

it was protected by the *Roman*; neither that the *Romans* ſhould deſtroy it without a Rebellion, which was incredible to think that ſuch an handful of Men as the *Jews* were, ſhould enterprize againſt the prodigious Force of that mighty Empire. Or if an obſerving Man could have gueſſed at a Defection, from a mutinous Temper remarkable in them; yet how could he have foretold that their City would have been perfectly deſtroyed by it? Every Rebellion did not end in ſuch a fatal and miſerable Deſolation, and the generous Mercy of the *Roman* Conquerors, was often extended to more formidable Enemies then the *Jews* were. Or how could any one have thought, that not one Stone of the Temple ſhould have been left upon another? Tho' the *Romans* did oftentimes demoliſh the Works and pull down the Houſes of their Enemies, yet out of Piety they were frequently wont to ſpare the Temple of the Gods, when they had nothing to recommend them but only their Sacredneſs; but if any one had been ſure that *Jeruſalem* would have been deſtroyed, he might have been almoſt confident that the Temple had been ſpared, it being ſo highly probable that the very Magnificence of ſo wonderful a Work; if there had been no regard had to its Sanctity, would have kept

kept the Victor from injuring it. 'Tis yet more Remarkable in this Prediction, that this City ſhould *be encompaſſed with Armies, and have a Trench caſt about it*, &c. Luk. 21. 20. Many Cities have been deſtroy'd without ſuch formal Sieges; and no Man would ever have gueſſed not only in our Saviours time, but in the beginning of *Titus* his Expedition, that ſuch a City as *Jeruſalem* could have had the boldneſs and folly to have held out a Siege againſt the Flower of the *Roman* Forces, and under the command of the Emperors Son. It is yet more ſtrange in this Prediction, that thoſe dreaful Mutinies which happened during the Siege of *Jeruſalem* and are related in *Joſephus*, are ſo diſtinctly foretold. *Brother ſhall betray the Brother to Death and the Father the Son, and Children ſhall riſe up againſt their Parents, and ſhall cauſe to be put to Death.* Mark. 13. 12. Now ſuch Mutinies in a Sige do very rarely happen, for Factions are wont to be laid aſleep in publick Dangers, and the fear of the common Enemy do uſually endear the moſt adverſe Parties to one another; but that there ſhould be ſuch Seditions in a City at a time of ſo formidable a Danger, which ſhould produce ſuch Tragical Effects as are related in the *Jewiſh* Hiſtory, and that at that time more Men

ſhould

ſhould be deſtroyed by the Tumults than by the Enemy, and that this ſhould be predicted too forty Years before, This does ſhew the particular Finger of God, and the infinite Knowledg of his Holy Spirit which revealed it. There is yet a more remarkable Paſſage in this Propheſy, that is the Advice of Chriſt upon the approach of this Deſolation for him, *which ſhould be in* Judea *to flee unto the Mountains.* Mat. 24. 16. Which Prediction was exactly fulfilled by the withdrawing of the Chriſtians from *Jeruſalem* before *Titus*'s Siege. For when *Ceſtius*'s *Gallus* ſat down firſt before the City, he raiſed his Siege for ſome time, there being no evident Cauſe of it, but only the eſpecial Providence of God; by which reſpit the Chriſtians left *Jeruſalem* and diſpoſed of themſelves in other Places; ſo that when *Titus* came to beſiege the City, there was not one Chriſtian left there. *Euſ. Hiſt. Eccleſ. Lib.* 3. But that, which is of all the moſt ſurprizing, is the Punctualneſs of Time in this Propheſy. *Verily I ſay unto you, this Generation ſhall not paſs awy till all this be fulfilled.* Luk. 21. 32. Now when this did ſo exactly fall out, and that Generation did not paſs away before *Jeruſalem* was deſtroyed, and all theſe particulars fulfilled, what can this be leſs than Divine Propheſy? Will

Will you ſay this was only conjectured by by Chriſt, and hit upon by chance? But you may as well ſay, *Joſephus*'s Hiſtory was the like; for 'tis as poſſible for ſuch a Book to be wrote by chance, as to conjectnre before hand ſo many particulars, which did really come to paſs to gueſs that ſuch a floriſhing City then in the hight of Peace ſhould be deſtroyed, and one of the moſt glorious Fabricks in the World be demoliſhed, and that after a long and dreadful Siege accompani'd with Famine, and unheard of Seditions, that part of the Inhabitants ſhould eſcape the Calamities, and the others be overwhelm'd in the Ruin; and all this to come to paſs thirty or forty Years after the Prediction juſt as it was ſaid it ſhould be; this is beyond the Power of Chance and Conjecture, and is owing only to the Divine Preſcience. For if Chriſt had nothing to favour this Prediction but Chance, moſt certainly he would have laid the ſcene farther off than one Jeneration, ſo that the ordinary Revolution of Governments, might in time have given incouragement to ſuch a pretended Propheſy; but to feign a Propheſy which was to come to Paſs in thirty or forty Years, and if it did not happen within that time, he ſhould venture the looſing for ever his Credit upon it, and being

branded

branded for an Impoſtor; This is not to be ſuppoſed of ſo Wiſe a Perſon, as the whole Character of Jeſus Chriſt beſpeaks him to be: So that it being impoſſible for theſe Particulars to be gueſſed at, or to have chanced to fall in with a Prediction; therefore you muſt own that they were foretold by the Divine Knowledg, and conſequently the Perſon, who was partaker of it, had the Doctrines which he Preach'd confirmed by God.

*Propheſy of the Increaſe of Chriſtianity.*

2. Another great Confirmation of our Saviours Religion, is his foretelling the Increaſe of it, that it ſhould be taught to all Nations. *Mat.* 28. 19. *Mark* 16. 15. This muſt needs be Divine Prediction, becauſe it would never have entered into the thoughts of any Man, to have expected ſuch a ſucceſs. If our Saviour had not fully foreknown what a Progreſs the Goſpel would make, to be ſure he would never have ſet his Diſciples upon preaching it to all Nations; for ſuch a wide diſperſion would in all Probability have ruin'd their Inſtitution, when by an uſual familiarity and keeping cloſer together, they ſeemingly might have better kept up. But who could expect any Succeſs by ſending ſuch a few Diſciples to preach over all the World.

World. If Jeſus Chriſt were what you pleaſe to make him, yet, I am ſure, he had too much Senſe to have ſuch a fond Conceit, that his New Religion ſhoud be preached all over the World; unleſs he himſelf was fully perſwaded that it was aſſiſted by God. To have been the founder of ſuch a Sect as the *Phariſees* or *Saducees*, within the Country of *Judea* only, would have been as much as any Mans Ambition, would ordinarily have prompted him to, and more than he could reaſonably expect. But for any one to talk of making Proſelites of the whole World by ordinary Means, muſt be madneſs, which ſo Prudent a Perſon as Jeſus Chriſt, could never have ſurmiſed; but when he foretold this, and put his Diſciples upon the propagating it to this extent, and when the Event did miraculouſly anſwer this Prediction, this is as undeniable Argument, that God almighty did aſſiſt both in procuring the Succeſs and predicting the Event.

3. 'Tis likewiſe an extraordionary Proof of the Divinity of the Goſpel, that our Saviour did foretel the working of Anti-Chriſt, and the coming of ſo many falſe Prophets, and the prevailing of ſo many peſtilent Hereſies, which inflected the Chriſtian

*Propheſy of Anti-Chriſt.*

ſtian Church in the very beginning of it. How could any one have reaſonably imagined, that ſo many groſs Hereſies could in ſo little a Time have bred in the Bowels of ſo pure and ſimple an Inſtitution as the Chriſtian Religion, which our Saviour firſt taught. If Chriſt had only conjectured ſuch an Event, it had been moſt abſurd to have imagined; it being contrary to the natural tendency of Things, and to what uſually happens in ſuch Caſes: All ſuch Sects and Inſtitutions, for a great while after their Beginning, do for the moſt Part maintain their Original Simplicity; they then only begin to divide into Parties and Schiſms, and to maintain an orthodox Doctrines, when they grow very Numerous and Aged, and have loſt their founders Precepts by furious Contentions with one another, and dark Traditions. Indeed our Saviour and Apoſtles, might very well have expected this in long Tract of Time, but to foretel that Anti-Chriſt ſhould begin to work upon the firſt planting of the Goſpel, and that thoſe falſe Religions ſhould be ſpread under the Notion of Chrſtianity, whilſt many of the firſt Propagators of the true Religon were alive to confute them, and to have all Things exactly anſwering to ſuch an extravagant Prediction; this cannot be owing

owing to human Conjectue, and a reaſoning from natural Cauſes, but to the Divine foreknowledge which foreſees not what Things are likely to be, but what they ſhall be.

4. And we have yet a farther Proof of the Truth of our Religion from the other Propheſies found in our Saviours Sermons and the Apoſtolick Writings. For what but the Spirit of God in Chriſt, could foretel his *Reſurrection from the Dead* the third Day after his Suffering; That immediately after his Departure the Holy Ghoſt, or the *Comforter ſhould come*; that ſuch dreadful Perſecutions ſhould befall the Chriſtians; that they ſhould be ſupernaturally inſpired with Divine Knowledg, and that upon all Occaſions the Holy Ghoſt ſhould put into their Minds what they ſhould ſay; that the Candleſticks, or Light of the Goſpel, ſhould be taken from the Aſiatick Churches and the like? Now when we have certain Information and Hiſtory, that theſe things were foretold, and we are ſure they did as certainly come to paſs; we cannot but own the Power of God co-operating with thoſe excellent Perſons, which did Predict all theſe things.

*Chriſt's Propheſy of his Reſurrection, the Comforter.*

*Phil.* I cannot but reflect upon this without ſome manner of Conviction, becauſe it is not to be paralled in other Caſes. But pray

Sir, what have you to urge next? I begin now to be in Love with Arguments upon this Subject, and therefore I pray, Sir, proceed to something else.

### *Argument* V.

*Cred.* Next, Sir, you have an unquestionable Argument of the Truth of Christianity, drawn from the Miracles, it was confirmed by. If Christianity had been a false Religion or Imposture, God Almighty had never sent such a supernatural Power, as that of Miracles, which none can do but by his Assistance, to confirm it. So that if Christ and the Apostles and some of their first Successors, really did such Miracles as are ascribed to them, the Religion which they taught is authorized by God, and consequently True. That Christ and his Apostles did such miraculous Works, as by a word or look to cure the Lame and Blind, and raise the Dead, is what the Writings of Eye Witnesses who wrote the Gospel, do to this day testify to us; and if you will not believe them, you must give up all the Credit of History and Annals which relate things done in former Ages, and which cannot be wrote with greater apperance

*From the Miracles which confirmed, the Christian Religion.*

apperance of Veracity and Sincerity, than theſe Books are. And I have ſhew'd you before * that there could be no juggle or illuſion in performing theſe Miracles, becauſe many of them were of ſuch a Nature that they could not poſſibly admit of any Deceit for the Lame and Blind and Leprous, when they were inſtantaneouſly Cured, and thouſands of the hungry People fed by ſuch a ſmall quantity of Proviſions, they could not be put upon in what they felt and experienced within them. When the Apoſtles went out to preach to all the World, and confirmed their Doctrines by the Miracles which they pretended to do wherever they came; if this had been all Cheat and Colluſion, it is impoſſible that ſuch an Impoſture could have thrived every where, and Men of all Nations have been impoſed upon by ſuch juglings. Nay the ſingle gift of Tongues was ſuch a Miraculous endowment, and carried ſuch Conviction with it ſelf to the Mind of every Auditor, that every one which heard the Apoſtles ſpeak after that wonderful Manner, muſt be abſolutely certain they were aſſiſted by God. For how was it poſſible that ſuch illiterate Men as

* *Conferance*, Part III.

*Miracles in our Saviours and Apoſtles time.*

they ſhould learn ſo many Languages as they ſpoke upon the Feaſt of Pentecoſt; when *Jews* of all Nations almoſt in the World, being at that time converted at *Jeruſalem*, heard the Apoſtles directing their diſcourſe to them in their own proper Language? Or if all theſe Languages were poſſible to be learned in time by human induſtry, and by Men of as Mean natural Parts and Education as they; yet it is abſolutely impoſſible for any one to learn one quarter of them in that time, which the Apoſtles muſt be ſuppoſed to have acquired them in. For it was but a few Days before when Chriſt gave them their Commiſſion to preach to all the World, and therefore in ſo ſhort a time to be ſure they could not learn all the Lauguages of the World to qualify them to diſcharge that Command of their Maſter. Nay if the firſt Chriſtians had not been to the utmoſt degree aſſured, that the Apoſtles were endowed with a truly Miraculous and Divine Power, they would never ſo univerſally have cloſed with their Doctrines, and been proſelyted in ſuch prodigious Numbers; for it could not be the Rhetorick of the Apoſtles which could perſuade ſuch multitudes, but thoſe Divine Credentials of a Miraculous Power which they carried along with them, which teſtified their Commiſſion from

from God to preach the Religion they were then ſetting up. This is Demonſtration to every one who believes the Goſpel Hiſtories, or has conſidered the incredible Progreſs of the Chriſtian Religion; which yet will appear more clearly when you conſider that this Miraculous Power did not ceaſe with the Apoſtles, nor is related only in the Goſpels, but laſted for ſome Centuries in the Chriſtian Church, and is related by other Authors.

*Miracles in the ſucceeding Ages of the Church.*

To be ſupernaturally and miraculouſly gifted, was a qualification for ſacred Orders in the firſt Times after Chriſt, and if any of the *non-donati* had got into Orders, their very Ordination conferred ſuch gifts upon them.

* Dodwelli. Diſſ. II. *in* Iren.

* And we hardly find any of the firſt Biſhops, or Presbyters that are Famous in Hiſtory, or by their Writings, but who were ſupernatnrally endow'd, if not with Miracles yet with Propheſies or other Gifts, as we find in the Inſtances of *Hermes Paſtors*'s Viſions, and the Propheſies related of *Ignatius* and *Quadratus*. *Euſebius* quotes *Apollonius*, in his Hiſtory *Eccl. Lib.* 5. who aſſerted that St. *John* raiſed a Man from the Dead at *Epheſus*, and *Tertullian Preſcr.* C. 36. records, that when

he was plunged into a Veſſel of ſcalding Oyl he was not hurt. And *Euſebius* relates from *Papias* of *Joſephus Juſtus*, that when he drank Poiſon it did him no harm, Hiſt. *Eccl. Lib.* 3. *Cap.* 39. It was a very common thing when the Martyrs were expoſed to the Wild Beaſts, that thoſe Savage Creatures would grow gentle of a ſudden, and not in the leaſt injure them; which St. *Ignatius* deſires of the *Romans*, that they ſhould not endeavour to obtain by their Prayers for him. *Ign. Ep. ad Rom.* The Epiſtle to the *Smyræans*, is an undoubted Authority of a Miraculous Power operating at the Martyrdom of *Polycarp*, when the Fire being kindled about that Holy Man, the flame beat it ſelf into an Arch over his Body, ſo as not to touch it, nor in the leaſt injure it; and when the *Conflictor* (that is the Man who was to put an end to their Lives who were left but half dead by the tearings of the Beaſts) had thruſt his Sword into this Martyr, there followed ſuch a prodigious Flux of Blood, as perfectly put out the Fire about him. That Devils were ejected out of poſſeſſed Perſons, at the adjuration of Chriſtians by the Name of Chriſt, and publickly confeſſed themſelves to be Devils, was a Truth ſo notorious in the Primitives Times, that the Apologiſts appeal to it as one of the moſt

moſt clear and indubitable Truths in the World. Says, *Minutus Felix*, *Ipſis Teſtibus eos eſſe Demonas de ſe verum confitentibus credite. Adjurati enim per Deum verum & ſolum, inviti miſeri, corporibus inhorreſcunt & vel exiliunt ſtatim, vel evaneſcunt gradatim, prout fides Patientis adjuvat, vel gratia curantis aſpirat. Believe your Gods themſelves, when they confeſs that they are Devils. For being adjured by the true and only God, they reſtleſs and tormented are afrighted within thoſe Bodies they Poſſeſs; and and do preſently leap out of them, or by degrees do vaniſh away, accordingly as the Faith of the Patient aſſiſts, or the Grace of the Curer does inſpire.* Tertullian in his Apology *Cap.* 23. Attacks the Heathens yet bolder. *Edatur aliquis ſub tribunalibus veſtris quem Demone agi conſtat*, &c. *Let any one be produced under your Tribunals, of whom it is plainly manifeſt that he is poſſeſſed by a Devil. This Spirit being commanded by any Chriſtian to ſpeak, ſhall as truly confeſs himſelf to be a Devil, as he does elſe where falſey to be a God. And ſo let any one be produced of thoſe who are ſaid to be inſpired of a God, that by gaping with their Mouths over the Altars, conceive the Deity by the ſmell of the broiling-fleſh, that are eaſed by belching, and Propheſy by painful breathing. Your cœleſtial Goddeſs which pro-*

*miſes Rain, and your Æſculapius who aſſiſts you with Phyſick and Drugs for ſick Men; unleſs theſe confeſs themſelves Devils, not daring to lie to a Chriſtian, we will give you leave to pour out the blood of that Chriſtian. What can be more manifeſt than the doing this? What can be more manifeſt than the doing this? What can be more faithful than ſuch an Experiment? The ſimplycity of this Truth lies before you, and the Evidence of it proves it ſelf. You need not ſuſpect Magick or any Jugling in this Matter. You cannot ſtand out if you will but believe your Eyes and your Ears.* But *Ireneus* is yet more expreſs about the Miracles, which were yet continuing in his time. *Fraternitate ſepiſſime propter aliquid neceſſarium, ea quæ eſt in quoquo loco Eccleſia univerſa poſtulante per jejunium eſt ſupplicationem multam, reverſus eſt ſpiritus mortui, & donatus eſt Homo Orationibus Sanctorum. It has oftentimes come to paſs in the Chriſtian Brotherhood, that upon ſome neceſſary Account, the National Church of any Place deſiring it by much Faſting and Prayer, that the Soul if the Dead has returned, and the Man has been given to the Prayers of the Saints.* Iren. Lib. 2. Cap. 56. And the ſame Father in another Place, declares that he himſelf has heard in his time, thoſe that had the Miraculous gift of Tongues.

*Multos*

*Multos audivimus Fratres in Ecclesia Prophetica habentes Charismata & per Spiritum universis linguis loquentes. We our selves have heard many Brethren in the Church who have had the Prophetical Gifts, and have spoke with all Tongues.* Now it is not to be supposed, that Men of such Abilities and good Sense as these Writers are, could be imposed upon in Matters of this Nature, and if there had not really been Miracles in their Times usually performed in the Church, that they could ever have believed that there were. Indeed some strange Stories might possibly pass upon the Ordinary People without examination; but Men so Philosophically bred as most of these Writers were, would never entertain any such Relations without the nicest Examination. Do you think that a Man of *Irenæus*'s Sense and Learning, could be imposed upon by any Men who pretended to the Gifts of Tongues, and when he declares he had heard *many of the Brethren who spoke with Tongues*, that he could be deceived by them all? If these had been Impostors, they would have been discover'd by Men of half *Irenæus*'s Sense and Learning. Or can you think that these Writers would venture to vouch these Miracles to be true, which they knew to be false? Do you imagine that they would attempt to tell a bare-

faced

faced Lie, which was ſo eaſily to be confuted, in the Face of the Heathen World? Do you think that they had no more Regard to their Religion, than to put the whole Credit of it upon this iſſue? For if there had not been ſuch Miracles at that time continuing in the Church, the Apologiſts had been made to have appealed to them, and dared the Heathen but to take notice of them for the Ruin of their Superſtition; when yet they knew there was nothing at all in them. This had been the moſt ready way for ever to have ruined the Credit of that Religion, they were Apologizing for. So that upon the moſt indubitable Authority and upon the moſt impartial Reaſoning, it does appear that there were ſuch Miracles done for the ſupport of the Chriſtian Religion both in the Apoſtles times, and for ſome Ages after, which are too plain to be denied, and cannot be ſhifted of by any Evaſions; and therefore we ſay, That God has by theſe confirmed the Chriſtian Religion, and conſequently it is the True.

*Argument*

## *Argument* VI.

If there were no other Argument of the Divinity of the Chriſtian Religion, but only the Excellency of the Doctrines it teaches, it was enough to convince any conſidering Man, that it came from God. For if the whole Body of the Chriſtian Religion were nothing elſe but the Reſult of natural Reaſoning, why ſhould not other Religions in the World, and other Syſtems of Morality be as good as this? How come the Doctrines of Jeſus Chriſt, to excell thoſe of all the famous Legiſlators and Philoſophers in the World? How come an obſcure Perſon in *Judea*, to draw up ſuch an admirable Scheme of Morality, as all that is laid down by the *Lycurgus*'s and *Numa*'s, the *Plato*'s and *Ariſtotles*, are not comparable to? How ſhould he in one or two years preaching, nay in one ſhort Sermon, advance the Ethical Doctrines to a greater hight and perfection, than ever they were brought to by any of the Sects of Philoſophers, who had made it their buſineſs to ſtudy them for ſome Ages? Moſt certainly, unleſs God had been aſſiſting in contriving this new Model of the Morality of Jeſus

*From the Excellency of the Chriſtian Doctrines.*

ſus Chriſt, it is impoſſible that it could ever have equalled, much leſs exceeded, that of the *Grecians* Schools, which had all the human Advantages, which he wanted, on their ſide There muſt be ſome Reaſon to be aſſigned, why Chriſts Morality ſhould be better than that of any Philoſopher or Legiſlator; now 'tis impoſſible to give any Natural Reaſon for it; and therefore we mnſt ſay, that this is owing to the ſupernatural Wiſdom of God, which aſſiſted in drawing up the Rules of our Chriſtian Doctrine, whilſt the Heathen Phyloſophy was only the Product of human Reaſoning. This Conſequence is ſo juſt, that it cannot be denied. It only remains to ſee whether or no theſe Doctrines of Chriſtianity are ſo excellent as we pretend they be, and do ſo extraordinarily Exceed the Doctrines of other Philoſophical Sects and Religions. And this I have in ſome meaſure ſhew'd you in our *ſecond Conference*, when I made out to you the great Defects of that natural Religion, which was taught by the old Philoſophers. But that the Argument may appear clear to you now, I will run over ſome Particulars of the Chriſtian Doctrine, when fairly conſidered will make the Divinity of it to be unqueſtionable.

1. Take

1. Take but a view of the more ſpeculative Parts of the Chriſtian Doctrine, and you will find nothing comparable to them in any Book of Philoſophy or any other Religion in the World. If there were nothing of the Divine aſſiſtances in the firſt teaching of our Chriſtian Doctrines, how come we in our Religion to have the Origin of the World delivered to more rationally than is to be found in any other Sect of Religion, or any of the moſt celebrated Philoſophers? How comes our Inſtitution ſo reaſonably to aſſert, that the World was *Created* in time by an all-wiſe God, when ſo many of the Learned Heathen Sages have run into ſo many fooliſh and paradoxical Errors about it, ſome attributed it to a blind Chance, and others to an eternal Fate? Why ſhould this Religion alone teach the great Cataſtrophes of the World, firſt by a *Deluge* and at laſt by a *Conflagration*? What reaſon can be given, that this Religion affords ſuch admirable and demonſtrative Arguments for a Divine *Providence*, when ſo many Learned Philoſophers among the Heathens own'd only a careleſs and unobſerving Deity, or bound all Things up by the Laws of a rigid Fatality? How comes this Inſtitution to aſ-

*Speculative Doctrines.*

ſert

ſert the *Unity of the Deity*, when all other Religions, but the *Jewiſh* from whence this ſprung, taught the Worſhip of a Plurality of Gods? Is it not a ſtrange Thing, that in this Religion there ſhould be not only no Error about the *Nature of God*, but that his Omnipotence, Juſtice, Mercy, *&c.* ſhould be more truly taught, and as far as is poſſible more juſtly explained, than in the Books of the moſt thinking Philoſopher? What reaſon can you give why Chriſtianity ſhould exhibit ſuch a ſatisfactory Account of the *Corruption of human Nature* by its deſcent from a depraved original Stock, when the greateſt Part of the World either never obſerved this Truth, or thoſe Philoſophers who did give ſuch lame and pitiful Explanations of it? Does it not ſeem wonderful to you, that this Religion ſhould afford ſuch a rational Account of the *Redemption* of a deparved and ſinful World, whereby the Honour of the Divine Juſtice might be ſecured by an infinite Satisfaction, and Gods Mercy likewiſe, be extended to the forfeited Souls of offending Mankind moſt certainly, if you did not know how theſe noble and rational Truths were firſt taught, you would ſay, that they ow'd their Original to the Wiſeſt Philoſophers in the World, who had out done all who had gone

gone before him. But when you conſider that thoſe Truths were either firſt taught, or wiſely wove into his Religion, by ſuch an obſcure Perſon as Jeſus Chriſt appeared to be; and who choſe for his Scholars, to teach theſe Truths to, only a few poor Fiſhermen; it is impoſſible that theſe Doctrines could be owing to the Humane Reaſoning of theſe ordinary men, but only to the Inſpiration of God who raiſed their Thoughts above thoſe of the greateſt Philoſophers. And by the ſame Reaſon too it is manifeſt, that the Moſaical Writings, and the other Scriptural Books owned by the Chriſtians, where many of theſe Truths are originally taught, were inſpired by God; becauſe the wiſeſt Humane Writers, with all their learning and application, could never arrive to the knowledge of them.

2 This Argument will be yet more ſtrong, when you conſider the more Practical Doctrines of the Chriſtian Religion. Does it not amaze men of your Principles when you conſider, that ſuch Mean Men, as theſe, ſhould deliver ſuch a Syſtem of Practical Rules as the World was never acquainted with before; and which ſhould as much exceed all the Ethicks, even of the *Stoicks* themſelves, as the Light of the Sun does the *Practical.*

the Twinkling of the Stars? What can you think, when you ſee theſe men alone teaching that admirable Virtue of *Humility*, which curbs mens bold aſpiring Spirits, ſweetens a haughty and turbulent Temper and gives them an obliging Air of Modeſty and Compliance; whilſt the Books of your Philoſophers are calculated only to inſpire men with Pride and Arrogance, to vaunt themſelves upon imaginary Vertues, and haughtily to deſpiſe the reſt of the World? How come theſe men to lay down ſuch excellent Rules for the Peace and Quiet of Mankind, for bearing with one another faults, for forgiving Injuries, for patient ſuffering of Affronts, and for loving Enemies, and themſelves to tranſcribe all this into their own Practice; when neither the Books nor the Lives of the Philoſophers came up to this Character? How come they to be more conſidering than all the reſt of the World, or that our Saviour Chriſt ſhould be the firſt Legiſlator or Founder of a Religion, who ſhould go about to obviate the Inconvenienceis of Polygamy and Divorce? Where do you find the true uſe of the Paſſions ſo exactly ſtated as in their Writings, where neither Anger is abſolutely forbid, nor Anger without a Cauſe is allowed? If the Chriſtian Philoſophy was not

not inſpired into theſe men, how could they poſſibly ſtate this Point better than *Ariſtotle* or *Stoicks?* The Philoſophers and moſt celebrated Legiſlators thought it enough to perſuade men to refrain from Vicious Actions; but why ſhould our Saviour and his Apoſtles go ſo much beyond this, as to forbid all Acts of Concupiſcence and unlawful Deſires? Is it not very much, that amidſt all the ſtudy of Morality by the Heathen Philoſophers for ſo long a time, and among all the fine things they ſaid upon it; that none ſhould be the Author of ſo uſeful a Precept as that of our Saviour, *whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do unto you, that ſhall ye do unto them?* It is true, there are a great many excellent Moral Truths ſcattered abroad in the Books of Philoſophers, ſome perhaps in *Plato*, ſome in *Ariſtotle*, and others in *Epictetus* or *Plutarch*: But for a compleat Syſtem of Morality, I defy you to find it any where, but in the Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt. Nay, theſe Philoſophers, if they were right in managing one Moral Point, they were wrong in another; the *Platoniſts*, *Stoicks*, *Peripateticks* and *Epicureans* were all guilty of ſome very notorious, and ſome very wicked Errors; but for a true Orthodox unacceptionable Morality, without any manner of fault,

which the impartial Reaſon of mankind muſt for ever aſſent to; the New Teſtament was the firſt Book that ever taught it in the World. What can you ſay to this? Was this pure Chance, that theſe illiterate Mechanicks out did all theſe ſects of Philoſophers? you may as well ſay, that a man by chance might write a better Book of Geometrical Elements than *Euclid*'s; for theſe Philoſophers ſtudied as much for their Books of Morality, as for thoſe they wrote in Geometry. Now that theſe ſtudied elaborate Books ſhould be far exceeded by the extemporary Preaching of ſuch Mean Men; this is perfect Demonſtration of the miraculous Aſſiſtance of God, who muſt divinely inſpire theſe Truths into their Minds, which it is impoſſible, that otherways they could ever have thought of. If there were no other Proof of the Divine Authority of the Chriſtian Religion, methinks this were enough to convince any reaſonable man of it.

3. But we may urge this Argument yet homer upon you, by putting you in mind of thoſe excellent Motives which the Founders of Chriſtianity have preſcribed to excite our Practice to the Doctrines they lay down. What poor mean Motives to the Practice of Morality were thoſe which the Hea-

Heathen Philoſophers advanced? They tell us, that we ought to be good and vertuous, becauſe Virtue is ſo beautiful a thing. And what one man among a hundred is to be convinced by this Argument? The vulgar part of mankind, and even the generality of other People are not of ſuch a generous frame of Soul, as to have any great regard to this Bravery of Virtue; neither have they leiſure or capacity to obſerve that order and comlineſs which diſplays it ſelf in virtuous Actions; or, if they had, the Pleaſures of ſenſe carry a ſtronger Byaſs with them, and turn their minds with much greater facility, than ſuch ſpeculative notions poſſibly can. What does it ſignify only to talk of the beautifulneſs of Virtue to a Young Man, who is inclined to Vanity and Luxury? The ſtrong impetus of his Paſſions, and the boiling of his Youthful Blood will overpower all ſuch Philoſophical Reflections, and he will never balk a ſenſual Satisfaction in compliance with a grave Thought. Now this defect of the Old Moral Principles, *Ariſtotle* was very ſenſible of, and therefore he in his Ethicks declares, that Young Men are not proper Auditors or Students of the Moral Philoſophy. But thoſe Motives, which the Chriſtian Religion lays down, are fitted to work upon

all Ages of Men; the fears of Hell can ſtill the young Voluptuarys Blood in his luſtful Deſigns, and the hopes of Heaven do often make men, in the bloom of their Youth, to deſpiſe all the giddy Vanities of this World. Now unleſs God Almighty did aſſiſt the firſt Propagators of this Religion, how is it poſſible, that men of their Figure ſhould, likewiſe in the Motives to a Virtuous Life, out-do the wiſeſt Moraliſts among the Heathen? How ſhould they underſtand Humane Nature better than thoſe, who laid out ſo much time in ſtudying it? Till you can give a ſatisfactory Reaſon for all this, which I am ſure is impoſſible for you to do, you muſt allow that God afforded theſe ordinary men ſuch a ſhare of the Divine Wiſdom, as made their Morality in all its Parts, infinitely to exceed the wiſeſt Lectures of the *Porch* and the *Lyceum.*

*Phil.* I confeſs I have nothing to ſay againſt this, and I cannot bear up againſt the ſtrength of ſo cogent an Argument. But I pray, Sir, go on.

*Argu-*

## *Argument* VII.

*Cred.* If the Chriſtian Religion were ſuch a Sham or Impoſture, as your Party would have it, why ſhould it not diſcover thoſe Abſurdities which all other Falſe Religions do? If Chriſt and the Apoſtles had only put a Trick upon the World in this Inſtitution, why ſhould they not fall into as much folly and ridiculouſneſs as all other Impoſtors? For I defy you to ſhew me any falſe Religion, that is, or has been in the World, but what hath many things ſo fooliſh in it, that it is not only impoſſible to come from an All-wiſe God, but does diſcover the Weakneſs of thoſe Men who firſt contrived it. For your Impoſtors are for the moſt part ordinary and illiterate men, and thoſe not of the ſtrongeſt heads; they generally want cloſe Thought and Contrivance to make matters hang together, and for this Reaſon they are guilty of ſo much ſillineſs, as is to be diſcerned in their Impoſtures.

*From Chriſtianity compared with the falſe Religion.*

Now this is evidently to be diſcovered in the old Heathen Religion, which was made up of a parcel of Idle Stories, for the

*Heathen Religion.*

moſt part coined at firſt by ſome ſilly Prieſts, and Poets in the Infancy of the *Grecian* State, though afterwards advanced to be the Religion of the greateſt part of the *Roman* Empire. But yet, for all this, nothing can appear more wretchedly ridiculous and abſurd than this Religion. Can any thing be ſo fooliſh, as to load the Divine Nature with ſo many Crimes and Imperfections, as the Heathen Theology does? to make one God, and that the Supreme God too, an Adulterer, and another a Pimp; one Goddeſs a Scold, and another a Whore; to ſtock Heaven with Strumpets, and Sodomites, and Drunkards, and Baſtards; to make their Deities fighting and quarrelling, diſſembling and lying; to be lame, and blind, and old, and wounded. Can any thing be more fooliſh than the ſtories in their Theogony; of their God's not only getting Children like men, but eating them like Cannibals; their Battels with Titans and Gyants, and their running out of Heaven for ſecurity upon Earth? what wretched ſilly Stuff is the Hiſtory of their Demi-Gods: or Heroes, of *Perſeus*, *Theſeus*, *Orpheus*, and all the other contradictious Tales you read in *Ovids Metamorphoſis*, which is nothing elſe but a Compendium of the Heathen Divinity?

And

And ſo likewiſe if you take a view of the Falſe Religion propagated by *Mahomet*, it is full of nonſenſical Abſurdities. What ſtrange ſtuff do we find in the Alchoran about the Angel of Death, whoſe Head is ſo big, that from one Eye to another is a journey of a thouſand and ſeventy days; of the Angels in the ſixt Heaven, one of which has ſeventy thouſand Heads, and as many Tongues; of the Cow which ſupports the Earth, which has four hundred Horns, and from one Horn to the other is a journey of a thouſand years; of the Angels which ſupport the Throne of God, that have Heads ſo big, that a Bird cannot fly from one Ear to the other; of the Key of the Treaſury of one of *Moſes* his Subjects, which was ſo big, that it weighed down a Cammel; of the Wives and different ſhapes of Angels, ſome of which are like Men, other like Horſes, Bulls, Cocks, *&c.* of the Devil's refuſing to riſe up to God Almighty, becauſe he was of a fiery Nature, and from thence God laying npon him the Curſe of being the Tempter of Men; of the true number of Sleepers, and whether the Dog was one and the like? *Mahometan.*

Or if you look into the ſuperſtition of the *Bramins*, which obtains among the *Eaſt-Indian* Idolaters, you will find the like ridiculous fooleries. You will ſee them wedded to a ſilly Superſtition, which conſiſts only in ſome fanciful Abſtinences and Humors, in not daring to touch a piece of Silver or Gold, in taking their Food only out of Earthen Veſſels, in ſtroling about all their life long as Vagabonds, or elſe ſhutting themſelves up in Hollow Trees or Caves, with other ridiculous Stories of Tranſmigration of Humane Souls, upon which Opinion ſome will not dare to pluck up a Root out of the Earth leſt they ſhould ſeparate a Soul from a Body; of the Suns being to have at leaſt ſeven Eyes, which will burn up the Earth, out of the Aſhes of which, two Eggs will ariſe, producing Male and Female for the peopling the Earth again; and laſtly of the two moſt deadly ſins, which are of all the moſt unpardonable, to kill a *Bramin*, or lie with his Wife. Which laſt fooliſh Caution *Mahomet* wove into his Impoſture, pronouncing a double and treble Damnation to his Wives who ſhould ſuffer themſelves to be abuſed, and to thoſe who abuſed them.

Bramins.

Nay,

Nay, even the *Jews* themſelves, when they vary from their Revelation delivered to them in the old Teſtament are guilty of the like Follies, as is evident in all the ſilly Tales of their *Talmud*, *viz.* of their making all Chriſtians their Slaves in the Kingdom of the *Meſſias*, where they ſhall nothing but eat and drink and feaſt upon the Fleſh of the *Leviathan*, who is then to be roaſted for the Circumciſed. *Traditions of the Talmud.*

Nay thoſe Chriſtians too, who have preſumed to mingle Impoſtures with the Goſpel Truths, and to add Lies to that Holy Religion, they have diſcovered the like Folly and Ridiculouſneſs; as is evident in the Legends of the *Dominicks* and *Francis*'s, and other ſilly Stories of the bleſſed Virgin. Theſe Forgers by their Improbabilites do diſcover their falſhood every ſtep they go, and and every Man of Senſe who reads their Writings, may ſee they carry the Mark of Impoſture in their Forehead. *Popiſh Legends.*

Now I pray, how comes it to paſs, if the Chriſtian Religion be an Impoſture, like one of theſe, that it does not diſcover the like Abſurdities? Why ſhould the Apoſtles of all the Cheats in the World have a Patent only for conſtant Sobriety and good Senſe? As for pure

pure natural Parts, it is a Queſtion whether St. *Matthew* or St. *John* had the ſuperiority above *Mahomet*; and therefore if they feigned all their Story, why ſhould not they make as many ſlips in their Judgment, and be guilty of as many Incongruities as the other? Why ſhould not St. *Luke*, in the Acts of the Apoſtles, tell as many idle Tales as the Authors of the *Talmud*, and fall into as many inconſiſtancies as a dreaming Monk in his Legend? There is no reaſon to be given, why all ſuch illiterate Impoſtures ſhould not write alike. Certainly, if theſe Men were Cheats, they were the moſt lucky ones that ever were, and I dare ſay ever will be in the World; to make a Story that ſhould diſcover, not only no Inconſiſtencies, but which is Fraught with ſuch wiſe thought and is ſo all of a piece with it ſelf, that a Cabal of the moſt judicious Philoſophers could not have bettered it. If they had been Cheats, they had the ſame human Imperfections to have diſcover'd it, as well as other like Impoſtors; but ſince the moſt malicious Adverſaries cannot Charge them with any ſuch Incongruities, and ſince they had not Learning enough to contrive an uniform and unexceptionable Fiction of this Nature; it follows by the juſteſt Reaſoning, that

that the Religion which they taught, is unqueſtionably True.

## *Argument* VIII.

*Phil.* Have you any thing to add further?

*Cred.* I have yet another Argument for the Truth of Chriſtianity, and that is, becauſe this Religion has the greateſt Influence upon Mens Lives, of any Religion that ever was in the World. If Chriſtianity had been an Impoſture, it might have made a few People to have run gadding after it. And pleaſed them with its Diſcipline or Ceremonies; but that it ſhould ſo ſtrangly have better'd their Lives beyond any other Inſtitution, is to be accounted for no other way, but that it came from God; by whoſe Wiſdom the Rules of this Holy Religion were preſcribed and by whoſe Grace they take effect.

*From the Influence of the Chriſtian Religion upon Mens Lives.*

Altho' it be too True, that Chriſtians do not generally live ſo well, as by their Religion they are bound to do; yet you cannot deny but that they live better, than the Heathen World formerly did, or any other People in the Univerſe, where Chriſtianity is not profeſſed.

profeſſed. Thoſe Vices, which were the uſual Practice of the old Heathen, are hardly heard of among Us; our Conſciences are ſhock'd, at the Apprehenſion of ſome of thoſe Crimes, which their Philoſophers and Teachers were Advocates for; and we do uſually practice many Vertues, which they had either no notion of, or did generally neglect. All Men are ſomething the better for living under the Chriſtian Inſtitution, the moſt Vitious among us, are neither ſo numerous nor quite ſo bad as the *Greek* and *Roman* Libertines were; but beſides this, we have ſuch Inſtances of Vertue and Piety, as they never were able to produce. Where but in the Chriſtian Religion is any true Devotion to be found, excluded from fooliſh Ceremonies and fond Petitions? But here you ſee Perſons of all Ages and Sexes, in the moſt devout and moſt rational Manner, not begging of God Riches and Honours, *&c.* as the the Heathen did, but earneſtly deſiring of him Protection and Pardon, Grace and Favour and everlaſting Happineſs in another World? Do you but look into one of our Churches, at our ordinary Communions, and ſee with what heavenly Devotion Pious Souls are there breathing out themſelves to God, how heartily they are lamenting their Miſcarriages,

riages, and how earneſtly begging Pardon for them; with what intenſion of deſire they implore the Divine Grace for their aſſiſtance, and with what flaming Affections they praiſe and adore the Goodneſs of God. Can you find any thing like this in the Heathen Religions, ſo much rational Devotion performed by thoſe, who perhaps are the greateſt Part young Men and Women? Indeed under Heatheniſm you may diſcover Tribes of Boys and Women and People of all Sorts running after the Feaſts of *Flora* and *Saturn* or *Cybele*, and praying for ſuch fooliſh Things as *Juvenal* laught at them for, but where do you find them devoutly going to Church and praying for Pardon and Grace? The Heathens might perhaps vaunt a Proud Magnificence, in building ſtately Temples, Portico's and Ampitheatres, but where do you find them exerciſing any Acts of True *Charity*, clothing the naked and feeding the hungry, and erecting and endowing Hoſpitals for the Poor, as we ſee daily among Chriſtians? In what other Religion can you inſtance in the greateſt Perſons condeſcending to the loweſt Acts of *Humility*, of Kings and Emperors with their own Hands to feed the Poor, and Empreſſes to Adminiſter to the Sick and Lame? In what other Inſtitution can you find ſuch

a generous *Contempt of the World* as in this, to undervalue Riches and Honour and Pleasures, under an affluence of them all, for the ſake of Immortality? Where is there to be found ſuch *Faſtings* and *Abſtinence* as under the Chriſtian Religion, which was ſo Univerſal in the Primitive Times, that it was to be diſcovered in their Joints and Faces, ſo that *Pallidi* and *Trepidi*, Pale and Trembling were the opprobrious Names, which, for this Reaſon, the Heathen gave them? Did ever any Religion afford Men ſuch an undaunted *Courage* and *Patience* under Sufferings; for to own themſelves Chriſtians to the Face of the perſecuting Judges, to mourn for the diſappointment of Martyrdom, to run with eagerneſs to the Racks and Lyons, to rejoice and ſing upon the Gridirons and in the Flames.

Now what reaſon can you aſſign, *Philologus*, why there ſhould be more ſincere good Men of the Chriſtian Religion, than of all the reſt beſides in the World, and why this only ſhould afford ſuch Heroical Inſtances of Vertue? You cannot ſay it is by Chance, becauſe then there would not be ſuch Inſtances in all Nations, and in all Ages. So that at the laſt you muſt be forced to own, that this comes to paſs partly by the Divine Principles of the Chriſtian Religion, which ſhew

Men

Men their Duty the beſt of all others, and partly by the Divine Grace, which co-operates with their honeſt Endeavours, and does frequently improve them to this wonful Perfection.

*Phil.* O my dear *Credentius*! I am aſhamed that I ſhould have conſidered theſe Truths no better; and I tremble to think what an unhappy Wretch I have been to make ſport, as I have too often done with ſo wiſe and ſo ſacred an Inſtitution. I begin to have my Mind now at laſt enlightened by thoſe heavenly Truths, and I pray God to encreaſe my Faith more and more. I do plainly perceive that the Chriſtian Religion is the beſt Syſtem of Morality which the World can boaſt of, and has a better Influence, than any other, upon Mens Lives. But one Thing ſticks with me ſtill, and that is; I doubt whether Chriſtianity, as it ſtands now, be the ſame as was preached by the Apoſtles, whether it is not bettered by the frequent Diſcourſes and Sermons of Chriſtian Philoſophers and Divines; and whether or no at the diſtance of ſo many hundred Years, we may not be impoſed upon in what the Apoſtles taught, and in the miraculous Power by which they confirmed their Doctrines. I pray give me ſome ſatisfaction in this and all my doubts are vaniſhed.

*Argument*

*Argument* IX.

*Cred.* If this be all that ſticks with you, I will endeavour to remove this Difficulty probably, to your Satisfaction; and which will ſerve too for a farther Argument of the Truth of Chriſtianity. As for the diſtance of Time, which you are ſo much afraid of, it ſignifies very little; for we may have now as clear proof of thoſe Matters ſixteen hundred Years after, as we might have had but an Hundred. For if Men, who lived within an hundred Years or leſs after the Apoſtles, did carefully examine theſe Matters, having opportunity and capacity to do it, and after having ſo done did acquieſce in the Truth of them; we at this diſtance have as little Reaſon to doubt of them, as if we had examined them our ſelves. It is plain, that the Main of the Chriſtian Religion or at leaſt as much as the Infidels concern themſelves with, has continued the ſame for many hundred Years laſt paſt. We find the principle Articles of Faith and Doctrine, the ſame in the Books of the School Divines, and before them in the whole Body of the *Greek* and *Latin* Fathers, up to the firſt Eccleſiaſtical

*From the Proof of what the Apoſtles taught and did.*

cleſiaſtical Writers. But for the preſent, we will ſtop at St. *Irenæus*, who flouriſhed before the Year 170, that is ſome what above an hundred Years after Chriſt's Aſcenſion. Now 'tis plain, that the main Points of Chriſtianity, Believed and Taught in *Irenæus*'s time, were the ſame as are now.

He ſpeaks the of ThreePerſons of theTrinity *Lib.* 1. *Cap* .2. *Lib.* 4. *Cap.* 25, 37. Of the Divinity and Eternity of the Word, *Lib.* 1. *Cap.* 19. *Lib.* 2. *Cap.* 18. Of the Condemnation of all Mankind by *Adam*'s Sin, *Lib.* 3. *Cap.* 30. That to Redeem Mankind thus loſt, it was requiſite that the Word ſhould be made Fleſh, by the Merits of whoſe Paſſion all Men might be ſaved, *Lib.* 3. *Cap.* 16. 20. 22. That good Men ſhould be eternally happy in Heaven, *Lib.* 5. *Cap.* 31. and wicked Men for ever puniſhed, *Lib.* 4. *Cap.* 47. That Mens Bodies ſhall ariſe at the laſt Day, *Lib.* 5. *Cap.* 26. He owns all the four Evangeliſts, and rejects all the ſpurious Goſpels, *Lib.* 3. *Cap.* 11. He throughout his Book, ſpeaks of the Goſpel Vertues like other Divines, and quotes other Books of Scripture, appealing to them as a Divine Authority, after the ſame manner as we would do now. Therefore in *Irenæus* his time, Chriſtianity was juſt the ſame thing as it is in ours. Now the Queſtion is, whether *Ire-*

*næus* had good grounds to believe this Religion, or whither he was not impos'd upon, and made to believe a Cheat. But the Character of *Irenæus* is so considerable, that you can by no means suspect the Latter. He was a Man of very good Sense and great Learning, (as appears by this Treatise against the Heresies, and his most judicious Epistle to Pope *Victor*) and therefore could not be imposed upon by any idle Stories, which he would take up without examination; and his Circumstances were such, that he might very well examine all Matters relating to the Apostles. For *Irenæus* was the Scholar of *Polycarp*, who was the Disciple of St. *John*, and who conversed with other of the Apostles; as he himself Records in his Book of Heresies, *Lib.* 3. *Cap.* 3. But is more particularly set down in his Epistle to *Florinus* the *Marcionite*, as it is Inserted in the 3d Book of *Eusebius*'s Ecclesiastical History. The Passage is very remarkable, and therefore I beg leave to repeat it entire to you in his own words. ταῦτα τὰ δόγματα, &c. *These Opinions* (says he to *Florinus*) *the Presbyters who were before us, and who convers'd with the Apostles, did not teach. For I saw you, whilst I was yet a Lad, in the lower* Asia *with* Polycarp, *behaving your self very well in the Palace, and endeavouring to do what was pleasing*

*to*

*to him. For I better remember theſe things, than thoſe which happened ſince. For what we learn when we are Boyes, increaſes together with the Soul, and is united with it. So that I am able to tell the very place, in which the bleſſed* Polycarp *was wont to ſit and Diſcourſe, his way of coming in and going out, the Character of his Life, and the Shape of his Body; what Diſcourſes he made to the People, and the Converſation, he ſaid, he had with St.* John *and with others that had ſeen the Lord; and how he remembred their Diſcourſes; what they ſaid concerning the Lord, concerning his* Miracles, *and concerning his* Doctrine, *according as* Polycarp *received them from thoſe, who had been the* Αὐτόπται *or Eye witneſſes of the Word of Life; ſo he related all theſe things* σύμφωνα ταῖς γραφαῖς *exactly agreeing with the Scriptures. Theſe things by the Mercy of God, I diligently heard, recording them not in Paper, but in my Heart, and by the Grace of God do always ruminate upon them.* From hence it is plain, 1. That *Irenæus* was bred up under one who had ſeen and converſed with the Apoſtles, and other *Autoptæ* who had ſeen Chriſt. 2. That he had heard this Perſon relating the Diſcourſe he had frequently had with them, as particularly concerning Chriſt's *Miracles* and *Doctrines*. 3. That all this Diſcourſe did exactly agree, with

what is Recorded in Scripture. 4. That this was no ſlight Enquiry, but diligently made, carefully attended to, and oftentimes with ſerioufneſs thought upon afterwards. What can the Unbelievers ſay to this? They cannot queſtion the ſincerity of *Irenæus*, and that he really was not convinc'd of the Truth of that Religion he was thus inſtructed into by *Polycarp*; for then, why did he ſuffer Martyrdom for it? They cannot ſay he wanted Prudence to make Enquiry; for this every Paſſage ſhews, that he took the moſt prudent Courſe, which any Man in his Circumſtances could poſſibly have taken. And do you your ſelf be judge whither he did not, There was, when *Irenæus* was a Lad, a great deal of Noiſe to be ſure, about the Religion of Jeſus Chriſt; what excellent Doctrines it taught, what good Men it made, and by what miraculous Powers it was confirmed; there were Books called the *Goſpels*, which gave an account of theſe Matters, 'tis true; but every one could not be ſure of the faithfulneſs of their Relations; or however, a prudent Man would have all the ſatisfaction he poſſibly could, in a matter of this nature. Now what Method could a Man, that was the moſt nicely Inquiſitive, take, which *Irenæus* did not? The Apoſtles were dead, and could not be appli'd to themſelves, and therefore

fore the next ſureſt courſe to be fully ſatisfied was, to have recourſe to ſome one, who alive, and who had familiarly convers'd with them. And this Method *Irenæus* took: he knew *Polycarp*, an antient Chriſtian Biſhop at *Smyrna*, who had in his former time, been intimately acquainted with the Apoſtles, and other *Autoptæ*, or Witneſſes of Chriſt's Reſurrection: Him he applied himſelf to, and was fully ſatified of the *Doctrines* and *Miracles* of Chriſt and his Apoſtles; and upon compariſon found, that what this good old Man reported of them, was the ſame which were wrote in the Goſpels; and this, I think, was the ampleſt ſatisfaction any Man could deſire. Now from hence 'tis plain, that the Doctrines of Chriſtianity could not be altered between the Apoſtles and *Irenæus*'s time, there being but one remove between them; for what he learned of *Polycarp*, *Polycarp* learned of the Apoſtles themſelves: So that, unleſs you think Chriſtianity was alter'd by *Polycarp*, it is the ſame in *Irenæus*, as it was originally deliver'd. And 'tis as plain, that *Irenæus* received ſuch Information about the *Miracles*, as did actually convince him of the Truth of them, and would probably have ſatisfied any other reaſonable Man. For why ſhould not *Irenæus* make as proper Inquiries, put as home Queſtions, and be as

little Credulous about theſe Matters, as any other wiſe Man? He had a Philoſophical Education, as appears by his Books, which ſhew a great Reading in all the different Sects; and ſuch a ſort of Breeding, does not make a Man over lyable to believe ſtrange Stories. He was a Man of acute Parts, as is plain, by his ſmart Confutation of the Hereticks; and if *Polycarp* had fed him only with ſome ſilly fanciful Stories for true Miracles, he would as ſoon have expos'd Chriſtianity in general, as thoſe crazed Heretical Notions, which in his Books he does. If you ſay, that *Irenæus* was very young when he made this Enquiry, and received this Information: To this I anſwer, That tho' he heard *Polycarp* when he was a Lad, yet even to his old Age, he *exactly remembred* what he ſaid, and *continually ruminated* upon what he Taught: if his Judgment was weak when he firſt heard it, it was ſtronger long after, when upon the moſt mature and deliberate Thoughts he approv'd it. Therefore you ſee *Philologus*, that Chriſtianity was not taken up at firſt by an unthinking Multitude, and handed down to others by a dark and confuſed Tradition, as the Unbelievers are wont to object; but there is as clear tracing its Original, as any other matter of Fact in the World.

But

But to come yet nigher to the Apoſtolick times, we have the Teſtimony of another Learned and Conſiderable Man, in favour of the *Miracles* which confirmed Chriſtianity; and that is of *Quadratus*, who wrote an Apology for the Chriſtian Religion, and preſented it to the Emperor *Adrian*, about the Year 120. *Euſeb.* ſays, that his Book does ſhew forth λαμπρὰ τεκμήρια τῆς ἀνδρὸς τῆς διανοίας καὶ τῆς ἀποστολικῆς ὀρθολογίας *clear Signs of the Wiſdom of the Man, and of an Apoſtolical ſound Doctrine*, that this Book was frequently read among the Chriſtians, and that he himſelf had a Coppy of it. Now in this Apology, *Quadratus* has this remarkable Expreſſion. τοῦ δὲ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν. The *Works of our Saviour were always manifeſt, becauſe they were true. For thoſe who were cured of Diſeaſes, and thoſe who were raiſed from the Dead, did not only appear juſt as they were cured, and when they were riſen again, but were to be ſeen a great while afterwards: and this not only when our Saviour was upon the Earth, but a conſiderable time after that; ſo that ſome of them lived even till my time.* Euſeb. Eccl. Hiſt. Lib. 4. Cap. 3. That *Quadratus* did not want Underſtanding, judiciouſly to enquire into thoſe Cures wrought by Chriſt, is plain, by *Euſebius*'s Character of him; and that he did not falſify, may very well be ſuppoſed, from his addreſſing his Apology to the Em

peror; to whom, if he had the Impudence to tell a notorious Lye, he would have the Caution not to do it, for fear of ruining the Cauſe he was pleading for; or if he had not this conſideration himſelf, his Brethren the Chriſtians, in whoſe behalf he acted, would never have ſuffer'd it.

But we may be farther ſatisfied in theſe Matters, by making a ſtep yet nigher to the Fountain head; and that is by taking a view of the ſtate of Chriſtianity in the Emperor *Trajan*'s Reign, to which time many of the *Autoptæ* lived, as particularly St. *John*, *Barſabas* ſurnamed *Juſtus*, *Act.* 1. 23. And the Daughters of *Philip*, *Act.* 21. 8. vid. *Euſeb. Eccl. Hiſt. Lib.* 3. *Cap.* 39. Now 'tis plain by *Pliny*'s Epiſtle, that at this time Chriſtianity was very widely ſpread, and Men of all qualities were joined to their Communion, then how is it poſſible that the Chriſtians ſhould take up with a blind hear-ſay ſtory, when ſo many conſiderable Perſons were alive, who were Eye Witneſſes to the matters of Fact in the Goſpel Hiſtory? Don't you think that all Mens Curioſity, would prompt them to enquire nicely of theſe Matters from theſe Perſons? And if they had not given a very ſatisfactory account of them, that Chriſtianity could never have increaſed as it did? If they had been dead before this time,

a Cheat

a Cheat might have been carried on better; but if Chriſtianity had been an impoſture, when ſo many intelligent Perſons came to be favourable to it, and to enquire after it as they did in *Trajan*'s time, theſe ſurviving Witneſſes, would have been ſo hard put to it by ſo many ſhrewd Queſtions, that this Inſtitution muſt needs, even at that time have miſcarried.

If we go any further backwards, we are got into the Apoſtolick times. And here we have Authors who were co-temporary with the Apoſtles, *viz. Barnabas*, *Clemens* and *Ignatius*, which write the ſame things which the Apoſtles Preach'd, and which the Books of the New Teſtament Records: They inculcate the ſame Truths which the Scriptures do, and ſuppoſe the Miracles which confirmed the Apoſtles Doctrines as unqueſtionable. So that you ſee *Philologus*, that as to the main, Chriſtianity was the ſame Sixteen Hundred Years ago as it is now; and that there is as undubitable proof of the miraculous Powers, which the Propagators of it wer endowed with, as there is of any of the Triumphs of the Emperors, or any other matter of Fact.

*Phil.* You have given me very great ſatisfaction as to this Point, and may God Almighty of his Goodneſs reward you for your Charity. If you have any more Inſtructions

to

to give me, I am willing to hear them with the moſt pleaſurable attention.

*Cred.* All that I have to add further, that you may the eaſier become a ſincere Diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt is this,

1. That for the future, you would leave of all acts of Senſuality and become a Practitioner of the true Goſpel Sobriety and Temperance. I don't ſay this, as if I taxed you you with a lewd ſcandalous Life, but I believe, you as the reſt of the Unbelievers, give your ſelf too looſe a Rein to Senſual Pleaſures; and when you will not wean your ſelves from theſe, you fall foul upon that Holy Religion which forbids them. Do but once perſwade your ſelf ſincerely to practice the Goſpel Vertues, and your Mind will raiſe but very few Difficulties againſt the Truth of it. For Men of the Perſuaſion that you have been engaged in, find in themſelves, a greater averſion to leave their Sins, than to embrace Chriſtianity; for the trueſt reaſon why they ſo much hate the Chriſtian Religion is, becauſe it continually upbraids their Conſciences with their ill Lives.

2. That you would endeavour to diveſt your ſelf of that fond affectation of Reaſoning, which the Unbelievers are notoriouſly guilty of. They are for making every thing they meet with, ſtrike ſail to their humane Reaſon,

Reaſon, and forcing all things to a level with the Principles they have taken up; not conſidering that many Divine Truths are bottom'd upon a different Foot, which is not the Reaſon of Man, but the Reaſon of God; and *his Thoughts are not like our Thoughts, nor his Ways like our Ways.* If they would once come to be modeſt and humble in their Minds, and think that the meaſures of a Divine Intellect, ought not to be always modelled according to the Plann of their carnal Thoughts, they would not be ſo averſe to the Doctrines of Chriſtianity, for not complying with their groſs Imaginations.

3. That you would leave of that light humour of Drolling, which is ſo common among that ſort of Men; becauſe, as I obſerved to you before, it hinders the true uſe of reaſoning, by the glaring Wit which is dazled in your Eyes, and makes every ſilly fallacy which looks bright and pleaſant, to paſs for Argument. Accuſtom your ſelf to cloſe Thought, and to weigh the nature and conſequents of Things abſtracted, from fine Words and witty Expreſſions; and when you hear Atheiſtical Objections, ſtrip them of that Tinſil they are for the moſt part wrap'd up in; and then you will be quickly able to diſcover what poor things they are.

4. That

4. That you ſhould not trouble your, ſelf, nor have worſe thoughts of Chriſtianity, for not being able to ſolve every Objection which is brought againſt it. For it is no Argument againſt the Truth of any thing, that there are ſome Difficulties about it. I am ſure I move, notwithſtanding there are ſome Arguments againſt Motion, which may be ſhocking to me; I am ſure I have a Soul, but yet it puzzles me to think how an immaterial Mind ſhould be united to a groſs Body. In ſuch Caſes I am only to conſider, if I have not ſufficient Arguments to confirm me the Opinion I am of, and if I have to fix my Thoughts there; for if I muſt be moved by every caſual Difficulty which ariſes, I muſt be a Sceptick to half the things in the World as long as I live.

5. That you would leave off your Atheiſtical Company. For when you hear them continually reviling Religion, you will not have thoſe venerable thoughts of it which you ought. When you aſſociate chiefly with ſuch Infidels, whoſe thoughts and talk are all in the Atheiſtical way, Chriſtianity will appear to you with an Air of Singularity, and you will not have that liking to it as otherways you would: and beſides, the continual ecchoing in your Ears

Ears of their Trivial Objections, will ſilence the wiſer Reaſonings of your own Mind. This is all, dear *Philologus*, I have to ſay to you upon this Subject; and I heartily pray to God it may be for your Advantage.

*Phil.* And for this, my deareſt Friend, I return you all the Thanks which a grateful Soul can utter: as having done me the greateſt kindneſs I could ever receive. I am already tranſported with the Goodneſs of Chriſtianity, and the Benefits I am like to receive by it, I find I am now come to my ſelf after a maze of intricate Errors; I have ſomething ſolid now to reſt my mind upon, after having ſo long fluctuated among uncertain and fantaſtical Notions. I have a ſteady Rule now to govern my Actions by, and if I act according to that, I am certain of a future Happineſs. Vile Wretch that I have been! ſo ungraciouſly to deſpiſe this unexpreſſible Goodneſs of God to Mankind; and to make a Sport with that, which I find muſt be my only Comfort. I now begin to be ſenſible what need I ſtand in, of of an Infinite Mercy, and the Meritorious Blood of a dying Saviour to attone for ſuch Impiety. O my Bleſſed Redeemer! if ever thou canſt in Mercy look upon thy Revilers and Crucifiers, let thy Blood be extended

tended to ſuch a wretched Blaſphemer as me.

I begin, my good *Credentius*, to be too ſerious, and too ſorrowful for Company, and therefore, with my repeated Thanks, I bid you farewell.

*FINIS.*

# *ERRATA.*

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